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Act Now : You have control over workplace bullying

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This thesis is submitted to Birkbeck, University of London  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Submitted October 2018

This is to confirm that the entire work presented in this thesis is the result of my own work.

Austin Aloysius Tay Chye Thiam

October 2018

## Abstract

This thesis research aims to identify and test the efficacy of a self-administered intervention that victims of workplace bullying can use to help themselves if they have fallen into a state of psychological inflexibility. Some such individuals will resort to using an active or passive approach to confront a bully. While these approaches can be useful to temporarily alleviate the negative experiences arising from workplace bullying, they do not help to address the negative thoughts and emotions, such as self-blame and shame, that can manifest themselves because of bullying. Individuals dwelling in their negative experiences are essentially allowing themselves to get stuck in their thinking, which can eventually lead to depression and stress. There is currently no self-administered intervention that deals with this.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) was chosen to be examined as a possible solution for this problem in this thesis research. ACT has been found to be useful in helping individuals who suffer from depression, stress and anxiety disorders, all of which are symptoms suffered by victims of workplace bullying. In the ACT model, there are six inter-related processes (acceptance, defusion, being present, self-as-context, committed action and values) and the culmination of all these processes helps individuals to become psychologically flexible.

Three studies were conducted in this thesis research and the participants were from Asia, specifically from Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. Study 1 involved a total of 50 participants using a questionnaire, sent using Qualtrics, an online software. It was conducted to identify whether those who have been exposed to workplace bullying are indeed low in psychological flexibility. This was found to be the case in this research. In Study 2, ten participants from those



who had participated in the questionnaire were identified to have been bullied and to have scored low in their psychological flexibility score. The ten participants were randomly allocated into either an intervention group or a control group. Those who were in the intervention group received three sessions of skills training, and, apart from two participants, the remaining participants were found to have shown some change in their psychological flexibility. Using a qualitative approach in Study 3, thematic analysis was conducted and revealed that the participants did show a change in their mindset and were able to apply what they had learned to attain psychological flexibility.

This thesis research reveals preliminary evidence of the efficacy of ACT for individuals who have been exposed to workplace bullying. This thesis should pave the way for further research in the area of workplace bullying, to explore and focus on intervention that bullied targets can use to help themselves to navigate through the residual psychological thoughts and emotions they carry as a result of their bullying experiences.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	5
Table of Contents	6
List of Figures	15
List of Tables	15
Chapter 1 : Workplace Bullying	17
1.1 What is workplace bullying	17
1.2 Categorization of workplace bullying behaviours	18
1.3 Labelling of workplace bullying	19
1.4 Retracing the origin of the definitions of workplace bullying	20
1.4.1 Mobbing and bullying	20
1.4.2 Risen interest in the phenomenon	20
1.4.3 Objective or subjective perspective?	22
1.5 Antecedents and causes of workplace bullying	23
1.5.1 Individual or organizational factors that caused workplace bullying	23
1.5.2 Workplace bullying research	24
1.6 Definitions	25
1.6.1 International Labour Organization (ILO)	25
1.6.2 Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI)	26
1.6.3 Research Definition – Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper	27
1.6.4 Criticisms on workplace bullying definitions	27
1.6.5 Similarities and Differences	29
1.7 Culture – Workplace Bullying in the East and West	32
1.7.1 Perception of workplace bullying in the East and West	32
1.7.2 Research in workplace bullying in the East and West	33
1.8 Research Tool in the East	34
1.8.1 Chinese Tool – The Chinese Workplace Bullying Scale (CWBS)	34
1.8.2 Asian Values	35
1.8.3 Is CWBS too China-centric?	36

1.8.4	Malaysian Tool – Malaysian Workplace Bullying Index (MWBI)	36
1.9	Confucianism and Taoism	38
1.10	Culture Research	39
1.11	Causes and Antecedents	42
1.11.1	Individual Factors	43
1.11.2	Impact of workplace bullying on an individual	45
1.11.3	Organizational Factors	46
1.11.4	Job Demands-Resources Model	47
1.11.5	Psychosocial Safety Climate	54
1.12	Enforcement of Anti-Bullying policies	57
1.13	Overall Summary	59
Chapter 2 : The cost of workplace bullying		60
2.1	What is The cost of workplace bullying	60
2.1.1	What are negative thoughts?	61
2.2	Workplace bullying – Impact on individuals	63
2.2.1	Psychological impact	64
2.2.1.1	Mental Well-being and Health	64
2.2.2	Physical impact	68
2.2.2.1	Coping strategies used by bullied individuals that affect their well-being	68
2.2.2.2	The physical attributes of individuals that exacerbate their feelings of being bullied	71
2.2.3	Professional impact	73
2.2.3.1	Social Standing	73
2.2.3.2	Face Loss	74
2.2.3.3	The impact of misbehaving in organizations as a consequence of being bullied	77
2.2.3.4	The impact of leaving organizations	78
2.2.3.5	The impact of litigation on individuals	80
2.3	Witness to bullying	83
2.3.1	Impact of workplace bullying to witnesses	83

2.3.1.1	Passive witnesses – Fear of taking a stand	84
2.3.1.2	Active witnesses – Fearless to take a stand	85
2.4	Workplace Bullying – Impact to Organizations	86
2.4.1	Sickness absenteeism	87
2.4.2	Loss of productivity	88
2.4.3	Turnover	89
2.4.4	Estimated costs of workplace bullying to organizations	92
2.5	Overall Summary	95
Chapter 3 : The Focus of this Research		98
3.1	What is the focus of this research	98
3.2	Psychological Flexibility and Bullying	99
3.3	Application of ACT	100
3.3.1	ACT research	100
3.3.2	Relational Aggression	101
3.2.3	Psychological Disorders	103
3.2.4	Eating Disorders	106
3.4	ACT in Workplace Bullying	107
3.4.1	ACT as an intervention in workplace bullying	107
3.4.2	Reasons	107
3.5	Overall Summary	109
Chapter 4 : The Intervention and Methodology		108
4.1	Psychopathologies in Workplace Bullying	108
4.2	What is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy?	110
4.2.1	Behavioural Therapy	111
4.2.2	First Wave of Behavioural Therapy	112
4.2.3	Second Wave of Behavioural Therapy – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy	113
4.2.4	Theoretical perspective of CBT	114
4.2.4.1	CBT in Practice	115
4.2.4.2	The Cognitive Model	117

4.2.4.3 Automatic Thoughts	117
4.2.4.4 Beliefs	118
4.2.5 Third Wave of Behavioural Therapy	121
4.2.6 Acceptance and Commitment Therapy	123
4.2.6.1 The Philosophical Perspective of ACT – Functional Contextualism	124
4.2.6.2 Theoretical Perspective of ACT – Relational Frame Theory	126
4.2.6.3 The ACT Psychological Flexibility Model	128
4.2.6.4 Experiential Avoidance	129
4.2.6.5 Cognitive Fusion	130
4.2.6.6 Dominance of the Conceptualized Past and Future; Limited Self-Knowledge	130
4.2.6.7 Attachment to the Conceptualised Self	131
4.2.6.8 Lack of Values Clarity or Contact	131
4.2.6.9 Inaction, Impulsivity or Avoidant Persistence	132
4.2.6.10 Psychological Inflexibility	132
4.2.6.11 Acceptance	133
4.2.6.12 Cognitive Defusion	134
4.2.6.13 Being Present	134
4.2.6.14 Self-As-Context	135
4.2.6.15 Defining Valued Directions	136
4.2.6.16 Committed Action	136
4.2.6.17 Psychological Flexibility	137
4.3 Why is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy chosen for this research?	137
4.3.1 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy	137
4.3.2 CBT vs ACT	138
4.3.3 CBT and ACT Research	141
4.3.4 CBT or ACT for Workplace Bullying	143
4.4 Research Questions	145
4.5 Overall Summary	148
Chapter 5 : Pre-Research Survey, Research Questions, Tools and Pilot Study	150
5.1 Reasons for doing a Pre-Research Survey	150

5.2	Pre-Research Survey	151
5.2.1	Participants	152
5.2.2	Pre-Research Survey Data	152
5.2.2.1	Section 1 – Questions 1 – 3	153
5.2.2.2	Classification of Experiences and Descriptions	154
5.2.2.3	Section 2 – Questions 4 – 6	155
5.2.2.4	What individuals should do	157
5.2.2.5	What organizations should do	158
5.2.2.6	Should workplace bullying be legislated?	159
5.2.2.7	Section 3 – Questions 7 – 9	162
5.2.2.8	Summary of the Pre-Research Survey	164
5.3	What next? Research idea, hypotheses, research tools and pilot study	165
5.3.1	Research Questions	165
5.3.2	Research Tools	168
5.3.2.1	Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R)	168
5.3.2.2	NAQ-R Psychometric Properties	168
5.3.2.3	NAQ-R – Reliability	171
5.3.2.4	NAQ-R – Validity	171
5.3.2.5	Work-Related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ)	172
5.3.2.6	WAAQ Psychometric Properties	172
5.3.2.7	The Genesis – Action and Acceptance Questionnaire (AAQ I)	173
5.3.2.8	The Modification – The Development of AAQ II	174
5.3.2.9	Psychological Flexibility in the workplace – The Development of WAAQ	174
5.3.2.10	Study 1 – WAAQ item generation	175
5.3.2.11	Study 2 – Confirmatory Factor Analyses	175
5.3.2.12	Study 3 – Comparison with AAQ-II and Construct Validity	176
5.3.2.13	Results – WAAQ’s Reliability and Validity	177
5.4	Are NAQ-R and WAAQ the right tools for this thesis research?	178
5.4.1	Justifications to use NAQ-R and WAAQ	178
5.4.1.1	NAQ-R – The right tool to determine exposure to workplace bullying	178
5.4.1.2	WAAQ – The right tool to identify Psychological Flexibility in a work context	179

5.4.1.3 One or two tools – NAQ-R and WAAQ or NAQWAAQ	180
5.5 Pilot Study	183
5.5.1 Participants	184
5.5.2 Pilot Study Data	185
5.5.3 Summary of the Pilot Study	191
5.6 Overall Summary	192
 Chapter 6 : Methods	 193
6.1 Research Paradigm	193
6.1.1 Purpose	193
6.1.2 Functional Contextualism	194
6.1.3 Psychological Flexibility	195
6.1.4 Mindfulness and Skills Training	195
6.2 Identification of participants – Organizational Participants and Individual Participants	199
6.2.1 Why Organizational Participants?	199
6.2.2 Organizational Participants	200
6.2.3 Individual Participants	201
6.3 Research Process	202
6.3.1 Stage 1 – Administration of Questionnaire	202
6.3.2 NAQ-R – Scores obtained by participants in the first part of the questionnaire (NAQWAAQ)	204
6.3.3 WAAQ – Scores obtained by participants in the second part of the questionnaire (NAQWAAQ)	205
6.3.4 NAQWAAQ	205
6.3.5 Stage 2 – Sample Group for the Second Phase of the Research	206
6.3.6 Stage 2 – ACT Skills Training (For the Treatment Group)	207
6.3.7 Delivery Method	207
6.3.7.1 Session One	208
6.3.7.2 The Components of the Skills Training	209
6.3.7.3 Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise	209



6.3.7.4 Debrief	211
6.3.7.5 Values and Values Driven Actions	211
6.3.7.6 Compass Metaphor – Goals and Values	212
6.3.7.7 Debrief	213
6.3.7.8 Values Cards	213
6.3.7.9 Home Practices 1 and 2	216
6.3.7.10 Session Two	218
6.3.7.11 Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise	218
6.3.7.12 Debrief	220
6.3.7.13 Reviewing of Home Practices	221
6.3.7.14 Skills Learning	223
6.3.7.15 Exercise 1– Monsters (Passengers) in the Bus	223
6.3.7.16 Debrief	224
6.3.7.17 Exercise 2 – Defusion Technique	224
6.3.7.18 Debrief	225
6.3.7.19 Exercise 3 – Cartoon Voice Technique	225
6.3.7.20 Debrief	227
6.3.7.21 Exercise 4 – Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion (Harris, 2009)	227
6.3.7.22 Debrief	228
6.3.7.23 Exercise 5 – Physicalizing Exercise	229
6.3.7.24 Debrief	230
6.3.7.25 Home Practices 1, 2 and 3	231
6.3.7.26 Session Three	234
6.3.7.27 Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise	234
6.3.7.28 Debrief	236
6.3.7.29 Review of Home Practices	237
6.3.7.30 Values Consistency Exercise	239
6.3.7.31 WAAQ	240
6.3.7.32 Research Debrief	241

Chapter 7 : Introduction – Results and Analysis	245
7.1 Study 1 – Workplace Bullying and Psychological Flexibility	247
7.1.1 Boxplot – NAQ-R and Statistical Analysis	247
7.1.2 Histogram – NAQ-R	249
7.1.3 A Skewed Distribution – What to do?	250
7.1.4 Boxplot – WAAQ and Statistical Analysis	251
7.1.5 Histogram – WAAQ	253
7.1.6 Scatterplot – NAQ-R and WAAQ	254
7.1.7 Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation	256
7.1.8 Bivariate Correlation	257
7.1.9 Multiple Regression – Hypothesis 1	257
7.2 Study 2 – Intervention (Treatment) and Non-Intervention (Control) Groups	260
7.2.1 Boxplot – WAAQ (Intervention and Control Groups) and Statistical Analysis	262
7.2.2 Welch Two Sample T-Test	265
7.2.3 Boxplot – WAAQ (Pre and Post Scores of Intervention Group) and Statistical Analysis	267
7.2.3.1 Verbatim statements from Participants 1 and 3	268
7.2.4 Two Way ANOVA to determine interaction	270
7.2.5 Statistical Analysis on Pre and Post Scores of Intervention Group	271
7.2.6 Paired T-Test	273
7.2.7 Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation	274
7.2.8 Multiple Regression – Hypothesis 2	277
7.3 Study 3 – Participants’ Perspectives	280
7.3.1 Thematic Analysis	281
7.3.2 Qualitative Data – Verbatim Statements from Participants 1 – 5	285
7.3.3 Themes	288
7.4 Overall Summary	292
 Chapter 8 : Discussion, Limitations and Further Research	 294
8.1 Part 1	294
8.1.1 What constitutes workplace bullying behaviours?	295

8.1.2	Workplace bullying definitions	296
8.1.3	The measurement of workplace bullying	297
8.1.4	Asian research into workplace bullying	298
8.1.5	Impacts on bullied individuals: The Psychological Impact, The Physical Impact and The Professional Impact	299
8.1.6	The Focus of this Thesis Research	301
8.1.7	Why was Study 1 important?	303
8.1.8	The identification of bullied individuals	304
8.1.9	The identification of psychologically inflexible individuals	304
8.1.10	Analysis of NAQ-R and WAAQ Score	305
8.1.11	Study 2 – Could bullied individuals become psychologically flexible?	307
8.1.12	Analysis of pre and post scores in the intervention group	309
8.1.13	Reasons why the results were not significant	310
8.1.14	Study 3 – Why a qualitative study?	312
8.1.15	Participants’ perspectives	313
8.1.16	Mindfulness	313
8.1.17	Defusion	314
8.1.18	Acceptance	315
8.1.19	Perspective Taking	316
8.1.20	Values	317
8.1.21	Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches	318
8.1.22	The application and impact of using these approaches	319
8.1.23	The measurement of validity	321
8.2	Part 2	321
8.2.1	Limitations	321
8.2.2	Sample size and Participants	322
8.2.3	The cut-off scores	323
8.2.4	The contamination of results	325
8.2.5	Processes and Procedures	326
8.2.6	Format of Delivery	327
8.2.7	Duration of Intervention	327

8.3	Part 3 – Further Research	328
8.3.1	A better scripted invitation letter	328
8.3.2	Specific targets	329
8.3.3	Mitigation of the contamination of results	329
8.4	Conclusion	330
	Appendices	332
	Participants’ Transcripts	450
	References	571

#### List of Figures

- 1) Psychological Flexibility Model (Chapter 1 and Chapter 4)
- 2) Dealing with being bullied
- 3) Dealing with being bullied and addiction
- 4) Psychological Inflexibility Model (Chapter 4)
- 5) Figure 1 – Boxplot NAQ-R (Chapter 7) – Participants’ Bullying Scores of 50 participants in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia
- 6) Figure 2 – Histogram (NAQ-R) Chapter 7 – Participants’ Bullying Scores of 50 participants in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia
- 7) Figure 3 – Boxplot WAAQ – Participants’ Psychological Flexibility Scores of 50 participants in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia
- 8) Figure 4 – Histogram WAAQ – Participants’ Psychological Flexibility Scores of 50 participants in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia
- 9) Figure 5 – Scatterplot Correlations of 50 Participants’ Psychological Flexibility Scores and Bullying Scores
- 10) Figure 6 – Boxplot (Intervention and Control)
- 11) Figure 7 – Boxplot WAAQ (Pre and Post Scores) Intervention Group
- 12) Figure 8 – Thematic Map

#### List of Tables

- 1) Pathways in the Unfolding Model of Voluntary Turnover
- 2) Bullying Experience and Outcomes

- 3) Table 1 – Participants’ Bullying Scores of 50 participants in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia
- 4) Table 2 – Participants’ Psychological Flexibility Scores of 50 participants in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia
- 5) Table 3 – Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation (Psychological Flexibility Scores and Bullying Scores)
- 6) Table 4 – Bivariate Correlation Table (Bullying Scores and Psychological Flexibility Scores)
- 7) Table 5 – Multiple Regression Hypothesis 1 (Descriptive Statistics)
- 8) Table 6 – Correlations
- 9) Table 7 – Variables
- 10) Table 8 – Model Summary
- 11) Table 9 – Anova
- 12) Table 10 – Coefficients
- 13) Table 11 – Median, Mean and Quartile
- 14) Table 12 – Pre and Post Scores (Intervention and Control Group)
- 15) Table 13 – Statistic Description (Pre and Post Scores for Intervention and Control Groups)
- 16) Table 14 – Welch Two Sample T-Test
- 17) Table 15 – Median, Mean and Quartile
- 18) Table 16 – Analysis of Variance
- 19) Table 17 – Intervention Pre-and Post-Scores (intervention group)
- 20) Table 18 – Statistic Description (Pre and Post Scores for Intervention Group)
- 21) Table 19 – Paired T-Test (Pre and Post Intervention Group)
- 22) Table 20 – Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation (Psychological Flexibility Scores Intervention Group)
- 23) Table 21 – Multiple Regression Hypothesis 2 (Descriptive Statistics)
- 24) Table 22 – Correlations
- 25) Table 23 – Variables
- 26) Table 24 – Model Summary
- 27) Table 25 – Anova
- 28) Table 26 – Coefficients

## **CHAPTER 1 : Workplace Bullying**

### **1. Workplace Bullying**

#### **1.1 What is workplace bullying**

Workplace bullying is a phenomenon that is common in the workplace but is not frequently openly discussed. This type of misbehaviour remains a topic that does not seem to be a priority for organizations, even though the impact of such misbehaviour has been found to have caused anxiety, negative affect and depressive symptoms in individuals (Bowling & Beehr, 2006, Hansen et al, 2006, and Martino, Hoel & Cooper, 2003), and to have contributed to reduced productivity and increased absenteeism in organizations (Deery, Walsh, & Guest, 2011 and Devonish, 2014). To understand what constitutes workplace bullying and its prevalence, it is necessary to delve into some fundamental aspects of what workplace bullying is. This chapter does this, and will be divided into three parts: Part 1 -What is workplace bullying?; Part 2 - Culture – Workplace bullying in the East (specifically in China and Malaysia) and the West; and Part 3 - Causes and Antecedents.

In Part 1, the discussion will focus on: the categorization of workplace bullying behaviours; the labelling of workplace bullying; retracing the origin of the definitions of workplace bullying; the antecedents and causes of workplace bullying; and workplace bullying research and definitions.

In Part 2, the focus will be on: the perception of workplace bullying in the East and West; research into workplace bullying in the East (specifically in China and Malaysia) and West; research tools in the East; and cultural research. In Part 3, the focus will be on: individual factors; the impact of workplace bullying on an individual; organizational factors; the job demands-resources model; the psychological safety climate; and enforcement of anti-bullying policies.

## 1.2 Categorization Of Workplace Bullying Behaviours

One of the reasons why workplace bullying remains a taboo topic in organisations is that there is still ambiguity as to what prescribed bullying behaviours are. Bullying behaviours have been considered as a form *counterproductive work behaviour* - that is defined as how employees would harm or would intend to harm organisations, organisational members, or both (Rotundo and Spector, 2010) by being aggressive, rumour mongering, uncooperative and assaulting others physically (Penney & Spector, 2002). Robinson and Bennett (1995) proposed workplace bullying as a type of *workplace defiance* - that is defined as voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members or both. *Workplace Aggression* is another type of behaviour that is defined as a form of workplace bullying. Neuman and Baron (2005) defined such aggression as ‘*any form of behaviour directed by one or more persons in a workplace towards the goal of harming one or more others in that workplace in ways the intended targets are motivated to avoid.*’ The aggressive behaviours include: psychological aggression; emotional abuse, generalized workplace abuse, workplace victimization, and social undermining. (Keashly and Jagatic, 2011).

These three categorisations of workplace behaviours result from research done primarily in North America. Although different in their definitions, they are similar in some ways. For example, all the categorisations include behaviours that will affect both individuals and organisations, and the fact that these behaviours are accompanied by aggression. Are these categorizations applicable in other parts of the world such as Europe or Asia? How do these categorisations help in formulating a universal definition of workplace bullying?

### 1.3 Labelling Of Workplace Bullying

Before looking at how workplace bullying is defined, let us look at how this ubiquitous phenomenon is labelled in different countries. For example, it is called *moral harassment or harcèlement moral* in France and Belgium; *harcèlement psychologique* in Quebec; *mobbing* in Scandinavia and Germany; and *bullying* in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. But how do all these terminologies come about? They are all traced back to Heinz Leymann, who first noticed the impact of workplace bullying on his patients.

Heinz Leymann (1990), was a Swedish psychiatrist who established the term ‘*mobbing*,’ and ‘*psychological terror*’ to describe workplace bullying. He developed the *Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terror* (LIPT), a questionnaire that consisted of 45 mobbing actions to test mobbing behaviours. He defined mobbing and psychological terror in working life as:

*‘hostile and unethical communication which is directed in a systematic way by one or a number of person mainly toward one individual..... these actions take place often (almost every day) and over a long period (at least for six months) and, because of this frequency and duration, result in considerable psychic, psychosomatic and social misery.’* (Leymann, 1990, p 120)

The different labels used to describe bullying in the workplace indicate that there are differences in the way workplace bullying is defined. It is therefore necessary to trace how bullying in the workplace is being defined and how research in this area has developed.



## **1.4 Retracing The Origin Of The Definitions Of Workplace Bullying**

### **1.4.1. Mobbing and bullying**

Although Leymann (1986, 1990a) was credited as the person first using the term ‘mobbing’ for workplace bullying, the term was in fact first adopted by Heinemann in the 1970s (Heinemann, 1972). It has been suggested that Heinemann adopted the term to describe violence that occurred in Swedish schools during that time. However, it was only when Leymann started to research bullying in the school yard in the 1980s and 1990s that the term and the concept of mobbing – as another name for bullying, was borrowed and then spread to other European countries. While the terms ‘mobbing’ and ‘bullying’ are often used interchangeably, there does seem to be a slight difference in them. According to Zapf and Einarsen (2005), bullying is described as a perpetrator behaving aggressively towards one or more targets, whereas mobbing is described as experiences of the targets exposed to harassment by one or more perpetrators. Differentiation of these definitions, while discrete, is in fact addressing the same phenomenon. This is because both mobbing and bullying can contain direct, subtle, physical forms of aggressive behaviours (Einarsen, 1999; Keashly and Harvey, 2005). Similarly, both mobbing and bullying have been considered in stress research as social stressors that can be manifested from employees’ social relationships (Kanner et al, 1981).

### **1.4.2. Risen interest in the phenomenon**

Research in workplace bullying took flight in Scandinavian countries like Norway (Einarsen & Raknes, 1991; Einarsen et al, 1994b; Kile, 1990; Matthiesen et al, 1989), Sweden (Leymann,

1990b, 1996) and Finland (Björkqvist, 1992; Björkqvist et al., 1994; Vartia, 1991, 1996), where the negative effects of this type of incivility and the impact on individuals at work were first recorded to impact individuals at work. Subsequently similar interest in workplace bullying began to spring up in countries like France, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. For example, in the United Kingdom surveys were launched to identify the scale of the problem. Two Fairness at Work surveys conducted by Fevre, Nichols, Prior et al (2009) and Grainger and Fitzner (2007) reported that disabled employees as well as lesbians, gay men and bisexual employees were particularly at risk of bullying, with prevalence rates of bullying double those of the general population. Fevre, Lewis, Robinson & Jones (2011) conducted a national study into ill treatment in the workplace. This study compiled evidence from nearly 4, 000 participants in home interviews, face to face interviews and four organisational case studies. The researchers reported that, in just over a two year period, just under half of the British workforce experience unreasonable treatment at work; that forty percent of employees experience incivility or disrespect over a two year period; and that violence and injury are also experienced by workers. They also reported that employees with disabilities or long-term health problems, younger employees and lesbian, gay and bisexual employees are all more likely to experience ill treatment at work. Fevre, Lewis, Robinson & Jones (2012) conducted the British Workplace Behaviour Survey (BWBS). Using a 21 item survey, administered to 3, 979 participants, they were able to identify three types of ill treatment : unreasonable management; incivility or disrespect; and violence. They found that most of their respondents experienced more than one type of ill treatment at work : thirty-three per cent of the respondents experienced unreasonable management and incivility and disrespect; six percent experienced violence; and about five percent who experienced violence also experienced both unreasonable management and incivility or disrespect. The rise in the interest in workplace

bullying can be attributed to media exposé of high profile court cases such as *Quigley v Complex Tooling and Moulding Ltd [2008] IESC 44*, also advocacy work done by researchers such as Gary and Ruth Namie of the Workplace Bullying Institute in the US and claims by zealous union representatives like the TUC in the UK.

#### **1.4.3. Objective or subjective perspective?**

How should workplace bullying be defined? Should the definition be viewed from an objective perspective (observable bullying behaviour) or subjective perspective (reliance on victim's appraisal of the bullying perspective) (Brodsky, 1976)?

Niedl (1995) argues that the definition of workplace bullying should be based on 'the subjective perception made by the victim that these repeated acts are hostile, humiliating and intimidating and that they are directed at himself/herself' (p 49). This type of perception is what Lazarus and Folkman (1984) considered as subjective appraisal by individuals when they are in a stressed situation. The use of subjective bullying is dependent on how individuals perceive and interpret the act done to them and this can be problematic as discrepancies can occur. For example, an incident that is viewed by one as inoffensive can be perceived by another to be offensive and one that requires immediate redress (Tersptra and Baker, 1991). Can an act be considered as bullying based on a single subjective perception? Some researchers argue that bullying is a long-term process (where repeated and systematic negative acts are aimed at targets, which result in their gradual stigmatization). It is not possible to characterize bullying from a mere single act because it is ambiguous and can only provide limited information. Thus, objective bullying has become the generally-accepted concept of workplace bullying. The constituents of workplace

bullying including power differences and the gradual process of stigmatization (Einarsen, 1999), that is a by-product of bullying, are observable behaviours. (Einarsen et al, 2003).

## **1.5 ANTECEDENTS AND CAUSES OF WORKPLACE BULLYING**

### **1.5.1. Individual or organizational factors that caused workplace bullying**

There are researchers who believe that individual factors are antecedents of bullying, while others believe that organizational factors are factors that perpetuate workplace bullying. Leymann (1993) believes that individuals are not responsible for the bullying they experience, instead he suggests that deficiencies in: 1) work design; 2) leadership behaviours; 3) low departmental morale; and 4) a victim's socially exposed position are the source of bullying. He also believes that poor conflict management, an organizational issue, can also result in bullying (Leymann, 1996). Leymann's work-environment hypothesis was tested. Researchers found that interpersonal conflicts, lack of organizational support, authoritarian leadership, no autonomy in work design, and organisational change were linked to bullying at work (O'Moore et al, 1998; Einarsen et al, 1994a; Vartia, 1996; and McCarthy, 1996). Although the results seem promising, the relationships established by these results was not able to explain any cause and effect. In addition, Einarsen et al (1994a) has reported that 10% of the variance in the prevalence of workplace bullying is attributed to work-environment factors. Thus, focusing primarily on the change of organizational structure and systems might not necessarily be the only factor to prevent and curb workplace bullying.

Einarsen (1999) prefers to view bullying as an interplay between people as he believes that to depend on situational and personal factors alone are insufficient to explain the phenomenon. He instead believes that there are two types of situations that are able to explain the concept of bullying. They are: predatory bullying – this is where victim is bullied because the perpetrator is exerting power on, or exploiting the weakness of an accidental victim; dispute-related bullying – this is when highly escalated interpersonal conflicts have occurred (Zapf & Gross, 2001).

### **1.5.2. Workplace Bullying Research**

The majority of workplace bullying literature focuses on bullying as an interpersonal issue between two or more employees (Einarsen et al, 2011) and the quantitative analysis of individual differences to identify personal characteristics that are susceptible to bullying (Coyne et al, 2000; Glaso et al, 2007). This can be attributed to the focus on the objective perspective, that is to say a focus on observable behaviour instead of the experience reported by victims. According to Burrell & Morgan (1979), in their classification of research paradigms, this type of objective approach is known as functionalism. Research that uses this approach seeks to provide explanations about why causal relationships exist between variables, and to provide solutions to solve issues identified in situation being investigated. For example, authoritarian and paternalistic leadership styles were found to be associated with workplace bullying (Ertureten et al, 2013). The type of approach is deterministic because relationships are measured using a form of objective measure such as the use of a questionnaire (quantitative approach) or through interviews or ethnography (qualitative approach). In the context of workplace bullying, this type of approach is useful as it is dependent on observable behaviours that can be measured instead of subjective recollections that can be unreliable due to the decay of memory (Hardt et al, 2013).

Researchers like Leymann (1993), believe that using a subjective approach to research workplace bullying is the way forward.. This is because, unlike those adopting an objective approach, these researchers are interested in understanding individuals' viewpoints of the situation. Using a qualitative approach (interviews or ethnography), researchers are able to gather insights from individuals' interpretation (victims or perpetrators) of the bullying situations they are involved in (Brand, 2009). This approach enables bullied individuals an unadulterated mode of sharing their bullying experiences and their interactions with their perpetrators. This enables researchers to have an understanding of how workplace bullying occurs from the perspectives of bullied individuals. From an organizational standpoint, understanding and knowing the issues that cause bullying in the workplace mean that rectification and prevention are possible.

In the following paragraphs, three different definitions will be discussed and they are taken from: the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) and the research definition as proposed by Einarsen et al (2003).

## **1.6 DEFINITIONS**

### **1.6.1. International Labour Organisation (ILO)**

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) 2006 defines workplace bullying as:

*'repeated offensive behaviour through vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine an individual or group of employees.'*

According to ILO, bullying behaviours include: making life difficult for those who are able to do the bully's job, punishing others for being too competent, refusing to delegate to others, shouting

at staff, persistently picking on people in front of others or in private, insisting that a way of doing things is always right, keeping individuals in their place by blocking their promotion, overloading others with work and reducing deadlines, and feeling envious of another's professional or social ability, so setting out to make them appear incompetent.

Integral to this definition is the idea that bullying behaviours need to be repeated and offensive, and are done by one individual to another individual or a group. Here, the perpetrator has a power of authority to inflict victims with humiliation, to sabotage them in their work or burdened them with a heavy workload. The ILO, however, provides no indication as to how repeated behaviour is measured and whether threatened or actual physical harm is considered as bullying.

### **1.6.2. Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI)**

The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) defines bullying as:

*'repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators.'* For the WBI, bullying behaviours include: sabotaging the targets by preventing work from getting done, verbal abuse, threatening conduct, humiliation, or intimidation.

In this definition, the perpetrator can be one or more than one person who will repeatedly cause harm to a target or targets through sabotage, verbal abuse, humiliation, or threats. As with the ILO's definition, there is no indication as to how repeated behaviour is measured.

### **1.6.3. Research Definition – Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper (2003)**

Einarsen and his colleagues (2003, p. 15) proposed a definition of bullying which is widely accepted:

*'harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work tasks. For the label of bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process it has to occur repeatedly and regularly (for example., weekly) and over a period of time (for example., about six months).'*

Here bullying is an escalating process in which a person who is in an inferior position becomes the target of negative acts. It is not bullying if a conflict occurs between two persons in an isolated event or if both involved in the conflicts are of equal strength.

In this definition, there are three distinct types of behaviours: harassing, offending, and socially excluding. To these researchers, bullying in the workplace can only be considered pernicious if it is done repeatedly, regularly over a period of time and in an escalating manner. If the behaviour is only done once, it is not considered as bullying within the scope of this definition.

### **1.6.4. Criticisms on workplace bullying definitions**

To determine workplace bullying, these definitions are embedded in a survey such as the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ), formulated as questions to determine whether individuals are exposed to workplace bullying. Often samples used are convenient. Those who most likely feel disenfranchised (Leymann, 1996) are likely to reply to such a questionnaire, which renders the



results biased. A working definition of bullying does not necessarily make it easy for individuals to understand the concept of workplace bullying. For example, a qualitative study conducted by Liefoghe and McKenzie-Davey (2003) found that, dependent on setting, bullying was classified by employees in different ways and attributed with a different array of meanings.

Fevre et al (2010) have argued that when researchers simply adopt a standardized survey such as NAQ, without any or little modifications of the survey to fit their purpose, the results obtained might result in unreliable and invalid data. Therefore, it is important that a pilot study be conducted so that changes can be made to fit the survey to the purpose of research. When there is a wide range of bullying behaviours that are arbitrary included in survey, it makes it difficult to distinguish behaviours that can be otherwise deemed to be part of one's working life. Attributing frequency and time span to classify individuals as being bullied may disregard a 'one off' serious incidence of workplace bullying (Lee, 2000) that can be equally detrimental to individuals. The questions used in a survey like NAQ might not necessarily be easy to understand (for example, "being ignored, excluded or sent to Coventry"). They may be too long and some their questions may overlap. All of these issues can be problematic, as it is difficult to determine whether individuals really do understand the questions or whether they are just simply answering the questions because they have been asked to.

It has been suggested that for researchers to measure the prevalence of negative workplace behaviours they need to improve the way they get their sample and the methods used for collecting data. Fevre et al (2010) believe that this can be done by the use of cognitive testing of survey questions to obtain qualitative data. According to these researchers, the use of cognitive testing of

surveys can provide insights into whether the questions designed are understood in similar ways by respondents and whether respondents have enough information to understand and answer the questions. It can also provide suggestions to remove ambiguous wordings from the questions. These researchers advocate an integrated approach, that is to use cognitive testing to get qualitative data to refine the survey questions, which in turn will improve the reliability and validity of the data collected.

#### **1.6.5. Similarities and Differences**

All these definitions show some similarities and some differences. For example, the definitions suggest that bullying behaviours need to be 1) repeated, 2) done to an individual or more persons by either one or more persons, and 3) consist of verbal, psychological and physical abuse. Einarsen et al (2003) further clarify what they mean by '*repeatedly*' and stipulate a time frame for the bullying behaviour (weekly in terms of regularity and over a period of 6 months). The other two definitions make no clarification of this point. One similarity between these definitions is that the concept of bullying seems to only take into account the objective instead of the subjective experience of the persons involved. This as explained, could be due to the ambiguity and limited information for appraisal when bullying is viewed through the subjective lens. In all the definitions, there is also no indication of what kind of threshold negative behaviours must reach before they are classified as bullying.

In all the three definitions, there is no explicit mention of intent needed for bullying behaviour to take place. This could be due to the fact that researchers have not been able to agree on this point (Einarsen et al, 2003). Some researchers believe that intent of perpetrator's behaviour

might be too difficult to establish (Hoel et al, 1999) because of cognitive biases where targets are likely to attribute perpetrator's behaviour solely on their internal personality and explicit intentions to harm instead of external circumstances such as organizational re-structure. However, if one should presume that intent is indeed a criterion, how does one go about doing this? Would the test of intent (*mens rea* – the mental element of a crime) and act (*actus reus* – the act ) used in criminal law be applicable here? Arguably one can say that bullying behaviours cannot be considered as criminal acts, but upon close examination on some bullying behaviours such as threats of violence, physical abuse or actual abuse (as taken from Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) – Einarsen et al 2009), could be considered as assault in criminal law in the UK. Assault is defined as:

*A person commits an assault if he does an act (which does not for this purpose include a mere omission to act) by which he intentionally or recklessly causes another person to apprehend immediate unlawful violence. (R v Venna [1976], R v Ireland [1997] and R v Burstow [1998])*

In other words, a perpetrator commits assault if the act he carried out is deemed by the victim to be unlawful and violent. It is also an assault if the perpetrator uses offensive words such as insults and offensive remarks towards a victim as determined by the Court in the case of *R v Constanza* [1997] . In this case, the court found the defendant guilty of assault because of the offensive words he wrote on the front door of his victim whom he stalked and against whom he mounted a 20- month hate campaign.

The application of criminal law, although it might seem to provide a viable option for victims to seek redress through the judicial process, does present a fundamental problem. To deem

someone guilty of bullying, a victim needs to prove that the perpetrator has the intent (*mens rea*) and have done the bullying act (*actus reus*). In other words, the perpetrator would have to admit to have the intention to commit the bullying act but this is a difficult task, as some researchers have encountered. (Einarsen et al, 2011). The inability to determine the intent of a perpetrator does not mean that the bullying act towards another does not cause harm. (Hershcovis, 2010). While intent might be a good yardstick for the legal punishment for a bullying, the focus in bullying research has been upon the harm bullying brings to a victim. It is, therefore, necessary to recognise this fact in the design of legislation and policies to prevent and counteract bullying behaviours in the workplace.

The similarities and differences of the definitions considered above, enable the conclusion to be drawn at definitions need to be applied appropriately. As all these definitions have been conceived from a western perspective, are they applicable in a non- western country. What would be the implications and impact of using such a westernised definition, for example in Asia. Is there a need to have an Asianised version of one of these definition, or is there a need to create a new Asian definition for workplace bullying. To explore all these questions, the focus will turn now towards Asia. It will be apt to include the concept of Confucianism as part of the discussion as this concept has been widely seen in the west to have a great deal of influence on, and in many cases to be the foundation of, Asian culture. (Ong, 2013).

## **1.7. Culture – Workplace Bullying In The East And West**

### **1.7.1. Perception of workplace bullying in the East and West**

The definitions of workplace bullying postulated by western researchers include both components of physical and psychological violence (Einarsen et al, 2003). One might ask whether such a western theoretical definition is helpful for the identification and the prevention of workplace bullying when it is being applied within an Asian context – that is to an Asian bullying sample. Some researchers have lamented that, to date, there has been little bullying research done in the East. (Jiang et al, 2012, Hong et al, 2014, and Seo et al, 2012). Could it be the case that culture has a part to play in the way Asian victims perceive workplace bullying? For example, Seo et al (2012) in their qualitative research with South Korean and British employees, found that collective group bullying was prevalent in South Korea but not in the United Kingdom. These researchers viewed collectivist perception as something unique to Korean culture. The concept of collectivist perception can be traced back to research done by Nisbett, Peng, Choi, and Norenzayan (2001), who compared the cognitions of East Asians and Westerners. They concluded that cultural differences influence participants' thought processes. That is, when focusing on an object, East Asians use a holistic approach whereas Westerners' approach is analytical and logical. The findings of Nisbett et al would seem to indicate that what acts constitute workplace bullying may be perceived differently by Eastern and Western employees.

### **1.7.2. Research in Workplace Bullying in the East and West**

Despite the frequent application of the workplace bullying assessment tool (Negative Act Questionnaire – NAQ, Einarsen et al, 2009) in various workplace environments such as: retail and wholesale based organisations (Devonish, 2013); private, public and voluntary sectors (Einarsen et al, 2009); and nursing (Iglesias and de Bengoa Vallejo, 2012), a challenge remains as there is still no common agreement as to what the key components of workplace bullying are. One distinct difference between research done in the West and the East is that, in the former, there is legislation to protect victims of bullying (Yang, 2001) whereas in the latter, there is no such legislation. Examples of western legislation are: the Fair Work Act 2009 (Australia); the Work Conditions Act 1999 (Netherlands); the Employment Relations Act 2000 and Health and Safety in Employment Act 2002 (New Zealand); Article 4 of the Spanish Estatuto de los Trabajadores (Spain); the Equality Act 2010, the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, and The Employment Rights Act 1996 (UK); and the Employment (Bullying at Work) Act 2014 (Gibraltar). To date, the legislation in Asia most closely addresses some form of harassment at work is Chapter 256A of Singapore’s Harassment Act, 2014.

Asian culture tends to be less pluralistic than Western culture, and more inclined to respect power and authority. Such cultural differences might influence the perception of workplace bullying in the two cultures. Unfortunately, while there are various articles on bullying written by researchers in Asia, very few of these researchers have published any empirical evidence on workplace bullying predominantly in Asia. (Qin & Shi, 2008 and Li & Nie, 2009). On the other hand, the different perspectives of what constitutes workplace bullying have made some Asian

researchers believe that there is need to have a bullying assessment tool specifically designed to cater to Asian Culture.

## **1.8. Research Tool In The East**

### **1.8.1. Chinese Tool - The Chinese Workplace Bullying Scale (CWBS) – See Appendix 1**

Li, Nie, Li, Wang and Zhao (2010) decided that there was a need to construct a workplace bullying scale to reflect what workplace bullying meant in a Chinese working environment. The researchers designed the Chinese Workplace Bullying Scale (CWBS) which they believed could also be used in other Asian cultures. The scale was developed from the integration of information collected from their reviews of workplace bullying literature, in-depth interviews conducted with employees, comments collected from human resources professionals and their analysis of a series of psychometric studies. The scale has fourteen questions measured on a five- point scale (never, occasionally, sometimes, always and continuously). The researchers believed that CWBS is compatible to the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) developed by Einarsen and Raknes (1997). Like the NAQ, the CWBS has a 3-factor structure: personal attack (personal derogation-NAQ); work pressure (work related harassment- NAQ); and social isolation (social exclusion - NAQ). There is a similarity between the tools in terms of their content, for example in the categories of personal attack and personal derogation, bullying behaviours can be committed through written, verbal and physical abuse. When it comes to bullying behaviours towards a person both tools have different definitions. In the NAQ, bullying is committed by someone who is senior to, or is a peer of, the victim whereas in CWBS, the bully can only be someone superior to the victim. CWBS

will look for bullying behaviours of social isolation, prevention of rewards and unfair assessment of work performance while NAQ focuses on bullying behaviours of neglect and belittling.

The differences in how behaviours are described in both bullying tools seem to suggest how workplace bullying is perceived through different cultural lenses, western culture's encouragement of individualism and eastern culture's preference for collectivism. Clearly there are differences between these two bullying assessment tools, but one similarity both tools share is the identification of how people are exposed to workplace bullying, a ubiquitous phenomenon despite the differences in culture.

### **1.8.2. Asian Values**

China, like most Asian countries, uses state authority to ensure the proper functioning of nation building and governance. It is not surprising, therefore, that leaders in Asian organisations use authority similarly in their relations with their subordinates (Dick & Rayner, 2004). The deference this produces makes it unlikely that employees in these organisations would voice out concerns about bullying in the workplace. In addition, because interpersonal relationships and maintaining harmony are considered important in Chinese culture, negative behaviours such as belittling or rejection, or even conflicts between co-workers, tend to go unreported (Li et al, 2010). One other reason as to why there is unreported bullying is the concept of saving face - '*liu mianzi*' (留面子), that governs the way people behave among work mates. Hu (1944), an anthropologist, believed that face - '*mianzi*' (面子) is a social status that is acquired through achievements and efforts that elevates a person's social standing within a group. In this context, an admission of



being a victim of workplace bullying will result in loss of face – ‘*mei mianzi*’ (沒面子) – and diminished social status.

### **1.8.3. Is CWBS too China-centric?**

Li et al's (2010) believe that there was a need to have a Chinese workplace bullying assessment resulted in the creation of the Chinese Workplace Bullying Scale. While they claimed that the scale could be used in other Asian cultures, they provided no proof that this was truly the case. There are two reasons why the application of the CWBS might not be applicable in other Asian countries. The first reason is that the researchers explicitly designed the scale to demonstrate how workplace bullying is perceived in the Chinese workplace. The second reason is that to extend the scale's application to other Asian cultures seems to suggest that workplace environments in other Asian countries are not dissimilar to that in China. Countries such as Japan and Korea, which have homogenous population as does China, might seem to be suitable for the application of CWBS. However, not all countries in Asia are like these. Countries like Singapore and Malaysia which are multi-racial might prove to be less suitable for CWBS. Presumptions of conceptual equivalence applied across the whole continent of Asia (Cavusgil and Das, 1997) are clearly too simplistic. Where does this leave us? Is there a possibility of a workplace bullying assessment tool for Asia or is there a need for tools designed for specific Asian cultures?

### **1.8.4. Malaysian Tool – Malaysian Workplace Bullying Index (MWBI) – See Appendix 2**

Kwan, Tuckey and Dollard (2014), in their chapter ‘*Dominant culture and Bullying: Personal Accounts of Workers in Malaysia*’ taken from the Psychosocial Factors at Work in Asia

Pacific, indicate their belief that to explore workplace bullying in Malaysia, an in-depth understanding is necessary of Malaysia's multi-ethnic Asian culture. These researchers believe that people from different cultures perceive bullying behaviours differently and that their perceptions are more pronounced when they are involved in research that included criteria on individualism and collectivism as found by Nordin and Jusoff, 2010 and Khalib and Ngan, 2006 respectively. Malaysia has three prominent ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian. As Malay is the dominant ethnic group, the official language is Malay. Kwan et al constructed six lay beliefs of workplace bullying and nineteen lay beliefs of bullying behaviours through thirteen semi-structured interviews. In their qualitative study, twenty employees were interviewed from various occupational settings from Sabah. Half of the participants were employed in the private sector and the other half in the government sector. They held the following occupations: administrative support staff, executives, academic staff. There were thirteen women and seven men. The participants all reported to have had some form of contact with workplace bullying, either as current target, current witness, former target and witness, former target and former witness. By analysing the perspectives of the participants, the researchers came out with their own definition of workplace bullying:

*'Workplace bullying is intimidating, persecuting, or offending behaviour with the intention to harm and victimise someone due to power imbalance; this behaviour causes physical and psychological distress to the target of the bullying.'*

These researchers believe that there is a difference in views between Western employees and Malaysian employees concerning workplace bullying. The former group believes workplace bullying should not be condoned whereas the latter group believes workplace bullying is common

and is an integral part of an organisational culture. The researchers attributed the beliefs of the Malaysian employees to the concept of collectivism and Confucianism as earlier reported by Ong (2013). With that in mind, in their new study, Kwan, Tuckey & Dollard (2016) believed that there is a need to have a form of Asian instrument for assessing workplace bullying and so designed the Malaysian Workplace Bullying Index (MWBI). This scale consists of 18 questions.

Can MWBI be the Asian equivalent of NAQ? To answer this, there are two immediate questions that need to be addressed. Firstly, as MWBI is a result of an exploratory study done by Kwan et al in 2014, the sample used may not have been representative as they did not specify the ethnicity breakdown in their discussion. Secondly, the belief that all Asian people's behaviours are governed by the teachings of Confucianism and Taoism (Nordin and Jusoff, 2010, Khalib and Ngan, 2006 and Ong, 2013) disregards the reality that Malaysia is a multi-religious, multi-racial and multi-lingual society. Confucianism and Taoism are tenets of Chinese culture and religious belief, but are not applicable to other faiths practised by the other ethnic groups in Malaysia which is predominantly Islamic.

### **1.9. Confucianism And Taoism**

Stressing the prevalence of Confucianism and Taoism seems to indicate that the researchers are interested only in the predominant ethnic group – Chinese – rather than the rest of the ethnic groups and religions. This is very ethnocentric. Surely such skewed preference of one ethnic group cannot be taken as the predominant cultural representation of a multiracial and multi lingual country like Malaysia or any other Asian countries with such diverse populations.

There are various reasons why Confucianism remains a concept in Asian countries other than China. One of these is that leaders of Asian countries are more inclined to enforce Confucian values through pragmatism – that is to deter their populations from adopting undesirable western values. It is thus a form of control mechanism (Kuo, 1992). Secondly, some scholars are still insistent that traditional Confucian values are retained by immigrant Chinese who have passed them down to their descendants, despite modernization (Kuo, 1987 and Ip, 2009). This though was disputed by Wong and Wong (1989), who found that Chinese Singaporeans were not as indoctrinated with Confucianism as their Taiwanese counterparts. Thirdly, Confucianism seems to be a label conceived by western social scientists such as Hofstede and Bond, (1988) to make sense of the development and growth of Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan, which were once under foreign governance. This western concept has stealthily crept into workplace bullying research, despite the irony that Confucianism was denounced by China itself during the China's Cultural Revolution (Lu, 2004).

#### **1.10. Cultural Research**

A study conducted by Power et al (2011) explored the impact of culture on the acceptability of workplace bullying across a wide range of countries. 1484 alumni and current MBA students from 14 countries on six continents were surveyed. The countries were clustered into: Southern Asia (India); Anglo (England, United States, Australia); Confucian Asia (Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong); Latin America (Colombia, Argentina, Mexico); Sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria); and Eastern Europe (Greece, Hungary and Poland). These clusters were taken from the GLOBE study conducted by House et al (2004) to identify leadership theory and behaviours of leaders in 25 countries.

The Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) study was conceived by Robert House in 1991 and was published in a book – ‘Globe Study in 62 Societies’ (2002)<sup>1</sup>. The study was based on data collected from 17,300 middle managers from 951 organizations in the food processing, financial services and telecommunication services industries. This study adopted some terminologies covering areas such as values, practices and organizational cultures.

Power et al (2011) , reported that employees from Confucian Asia found work-related bullying more acceptable than their counterparts in the Anglo, Latin America and Sub-Saharan African country clusters. These employees were also found to accept physically intimidation more acceptable than those in Anglo and Latin American country clusters. The researchers believed that because employees in Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong had high performance orientation, they would work together and have a respect of hierarchy and loyalty that results in them accepting bullying behaviours.

Power et al’s study is widely cited and has been used to justify why Asian employees accept workplace bullying and are not likely to report such misbehaviour. There are, however, some issues with this study. For example, the sample used was not representative, as they were alumni of, or current students of, MBA programmes. The second issue is the classification of Confucian Asia taken from the GLOBE study, which in turn has developed concepts taken from Hofstede’s IBM study on culture. (Hofstede, 1980)

The IBM study conducted by Hofstede (1980) was based on data collected on work attitudes within IBM from 60,000 employees from 50 countries. There were 4 dimensions used : Power Distance (related to problems of inequality); Uncertainty Avoidance (related to problems of dealing with the unknown and unfamiliar); Individualism-Collectivism (related to problems of interpersonal ties); Masculinity-Femininity (related to emotional gender roles); and Long versus Short-term Orientation (related to deferment of gratification).

Cultural studies like these have been marred with problems in their definitions, methodologies and equivalence (Jones, 2007). For example, Hofstede defined culture as:

*'A collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group from another' (1980, p25)*

*'Mental programming ... patterns of thinking and feeling and potential acting' (1991a, 4).*

Jones (2007) argued that culture is not something that is 'easily acquired', rather is a 'slow process of growing into the society'. He believed that culture is made up of these components: learning values; partaking in rituals; modelling against heroes; and understanding symbols. He went on to state that individuals acquire these components from birth and are influenced by family, education, religion, friends and media. It has also been argued that cross-cultural studies like GLOBE and IBM can be problematic because of their ambiguous definitions of culture (Cavusgil and Das, 1997). The issue of definition can be open to interpretation (Nasif, Al-Daej, Ebrahimi and Thibodeux, 1992, p82), especially when there are 164 definitions of what culture is (Olie, 1995, p 128). The methods used in such cross-cultural studies are usually ethnocentric and restricted by a specific time frame, both of these can create bias, misinterpretation and inaccuracies in the collected data (Lubrosky, 1959, p 326; Nasif et al, 1991, p83-84). When cross-cultural research is conducted using a single-disciplinary instead of a multi-disciplinary approach, data collected can be limited and skewed. In sum, depending on studies like GLOBE and IBM to explain cross cultural phenomena in Asia (Confucianism and collectivism) in workplace bullying research can be misleading.

The use of Confucianism by western researchers to explain cultural differences between Asia and the West lacks rigour and comprehensiveness, therefore researchers in workplace bullying need to look at such types of studies through different lenses and to be more discerning when citing them. Where does this leave us with regards to applying the right workplace bullying tool in Asia? As discussed above, culturally driven assessment tools have failed miserably. Although culture varies from country to country, basing definitions and measures of workplace bullying on cultural differences is less likely to produce useful results than examining the causes, implications, and prevention of workplace bullying. The phenomenon is ubiquitous in whatever language or culture.

In this respect, the use of NAQ-R as the tool for assessing workplace bullying seems to be appropriate. Researchers have generally recognised this; Tambur and Vadi (2009), Giorgi, Arenas and Leon-Perez (2011), and Jiang, Dong and Wang (2012), Tsuno, Kawakami, Inoue and Abe (2010) have all used NAQ-R, whilst translating it to fit the context of their research. As there is not a specific Asianised workplace bullying assessment tool equivalent to the NAQ-R that can be used across Asia, NAQ-R remains the tool to be used in this PhD research to determine exposure to workplace bullying.

### **1.11. Causes And Antecedents**

*“Bullying at work is claimed to be more crippling and devastating a problem for employees than all other work related stress put together...” (Einarsen, 1999).*

Workplace bullying is a phenomenon that can affect both individuals and organisations, and researchers have been concerned and interested in researching the causes and antecedents of workplace bullying. They have done so largely in order that changes and modifications might be made to diminish workplace bullying. Researchers have focused primarily one or two areas: individual and organisational factors.

#### **1.11.1. Individual Factors**

Researchers have found that certain personality traits can make people more susceptible to become bullies or victims of workplace bullying. Coyne, Seigne & Randall (2000) found that there were clear differences in personality dispositions between victims and non-victims of workplace bullying. They surveyed 60 victims and 60 non-victims from one public and one private organization using the ICES Personality Inventory (Bartram, 1994, 1998, - Independence, Conscientious, Extroversion and Stability), which they closely mapped onto the Big Five Personality factors. Victims were found to show less independence, extroversion and stability, but were found to be more conscientious than non-victims. The results found in this research aligned with previous research conducted by Einarsen et al, 1994; O'Moore et al, 1998; Vartia, 1996; and Zapf, 1999. Other researchers have attributed high Negative Affect (NA), such as anger, fear, worry, anxiousness and sadness, as a predictor for victimization (Watson & Clark 1984). Employees who scored high in Negative Affect were found to be likely targets of aggression from other organizational members (Aquino et al, 1999, Aquino & Bradfield 2000, Tepper et al, 2006). These studies are in line with the results found by Coyne et al (2000) because individuals who lack stability emotionally are likely to experience negative emotions such as anxiety and depression (Costa et al, 1991). Identifying certain personality traits in individuals prone to bullying in the



workplace allows organizations to intervene earlier to prevent bullying from happening. While this can be done by screening individuals in the early stages of the recruitment process, organizations might find themselves embroiled in a lawsuit as such screening could be considered as illegal and unethical (Coyne et al, 2000).

Conflicting results have been found with extraverted (Glasø et al, 2007), and introverted (Coyne et al, 2000) employees by researchers investigating which type of employee is prone to be a victim of workplace bullying (Vartia, 1996). Those who suffered from low self-esteem have been found to be victims of workplace bullying (Einarsen et al, 1994, Harvey & Keashly 2003, Matthiesen & Einarsen 2001, Bowling & Beehr 2006). Other researchers have gone further to say that victimization affects the self-esteem of employees (Björkvist et al, 1994, Lee & Brotheridge, 2006, Liefoghe & Davey, 2001, Tepper, 2000). However, the causality between self-esteem and victimization remains unclear. One could argue that individuals who are low in self-esteem might not have the courage to stand up against their bullies (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001) or to be good at managing conflicts with others (Zapf, 1999). Individuals who had past experiences with victimization may already be in a state of low self-esteem, thus might have resigned themselves to being bullied as a type of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1972). Research has shown that low self-esteem in individuals can be a reason for making them susceptible to being victims of bullying. Other easy targets for bullies have been found to be individuals who misbehave in organisations, that is who do not conform to citizenship behaviour (Aquino & Bommer, 2003), or have displayed discontentment of past mistreatments (Cortina & Magley, 2003), or have adopted a confrontational and dominant form of conflict style to deal with bullies (Aquino 2000, Zapf & Gross 2001).

Researchers have found that by focusing solely on personality traits will preclude other factors that could contribute to the exposure of workplace bullying, such as perceived stressors, work climate and perceived victimization (Mathisen, Øgaard & Einarsen, 2012). Despite the conflicting views of what individual factors contribute to being exposed to workplace bullying, one thing is constant – bullying can happen to anyone. It is therefore important to know how bullying can impact an individual at work so as to allow organizations to look at preventive measures.

### **1.11.2. Impact of Workplace Bullying on An Individual**

It has been found that there is a positive and significant relationship between those who have been exposed to bullying in the workplace and some psychological factors such as posttraumatic stress (Balducci, Alfano, & Fraccaroli, 2009). These researchers also found that the frequency of bullying predicted the way people would behave and would have suicidal ideation. Some of the negative health conditions found in victims of workplace bullying included anxiety and depression (Hogh, Mikkelsen, & Hansen, 2011) and psychological distress (Nielsen et al, 2012). Somatic, depressive, and anxiety symptoms, as well as stress and general health poorer than non-bullied employees, have also found. (Hallberg and Strandmark 2006; Kivimäki et al, 2003; Mikkelsen and Einarsen 2002; Hogh et al, 2005; Hansen et al, 2006). In a 2-year follow up study, those who had been bullied or had witnessed workplace bullying reported more sleep difficulties than those who had not bullied or had not witnessed any workplace bullying. (Hansen, Hogh, Garde & Persson, 2014). The impact of bullying can also result in the increase of sickness absence (Ortega et al, 2011; Clausen et al, 2012; Kivimäki et al, 2000).

In summary, while people who have certain personality traits or behave in certain ways in organisations seem to have a higher probability of being exposed to bullying than others, bullying can happen to anyone and it does affect the wellbeing and health of employees. How then can bullying in the workplace be curbed and what can individuals do to ensure that they do not become victims of bullying? Are bullies the products of the work conditions they are in? Are the root causes of workplace bullying related to organizational factors (Leymann, 1993, 1996)? To answer all the questions, it is necessary to look at the various organizational factors that might contribute to workplace bullying and whether anything can be done to prevent bullying.

### **1.11.3. Organizational Factors**

Zimbardo (2007) believes that individuals behave badly because of the situations that are created by bad systems. He claims that even good people can behave badly when they are in situations that encourage those behaviours. This is echoed by Nelson and Hogan (2009), who believe that individuals will exhibit maladaptive behaviours when they are in situations that perpetuate stress and pressure. If Leymann is right to say that any organization is a fertile ground for the nurturing of bullying, would identifying the organizational ‘seeds’ of such behaviour eliminate bullying once and for all? To design any intervention strategies, it would be necessary to identify what these causes are. The following paragraphs will focus on two of these organizational factors, the concept of Job Demands-Resources Model (work environment hypothesis) and Psychosocial Safety Climate.

#### **1.11.4 The Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R)**

##### **What is the Job Demands-Resources model?**

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker et al, 2003b; c; Demerouti et al, 2001a, b) assumes that every occupation come with its own specific risk factors (i.e. job demands and job resources) that are associated with stress. As compared with some models such as the Demand-Control model (DCM, Karasek, 1979, 1998) and the Effort-Reward balance model (ERI, Siegrist, 1996), this is an over-arching model as it can be applied to various occupational settings notwithstanding any particular demands and resources involved. The DCM and ERI models assume that job strains such as burnout, ill-health and repetitive strain are caused by the lack of job resources, such as job autonomy in DCM and salary, esteem reward and security/career opportunities in ERI. Such simplistic classifications from these two models do not reflect accurately the complex reality of working organizations. Research on employee wellbeing has found that apart from high psychological and physical job demands, lack of rewards and lack of autonomy, other variables such as emotional demands, social support from colleagues, supervisory support and performance feedback are equally important (Halbesleben and Buckley, 2004; Kahn and Byosserie, 1992; Lee and Ashforth, 1996). JD-R, on the other hand, is different because its application is not restrictive nor limited by a set of variables, and is relevant to all job positions.

In the JD-R model, job demands refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of a job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort or skills that are associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007); for example, a high work pressure, an unfavourable physical environment or emotionally

demanding interactions with others. Job resources (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) refer to physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of a job that are:

- functional in achieving work goals.
- are able to reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs.
- able to stimulate personal growth, learning and development.

### Two psychological (dual) processes

There are two different underlying psychological processes within the JD-R model that play a vital role in the development of job strain and motivation. (See Figure 1 below)

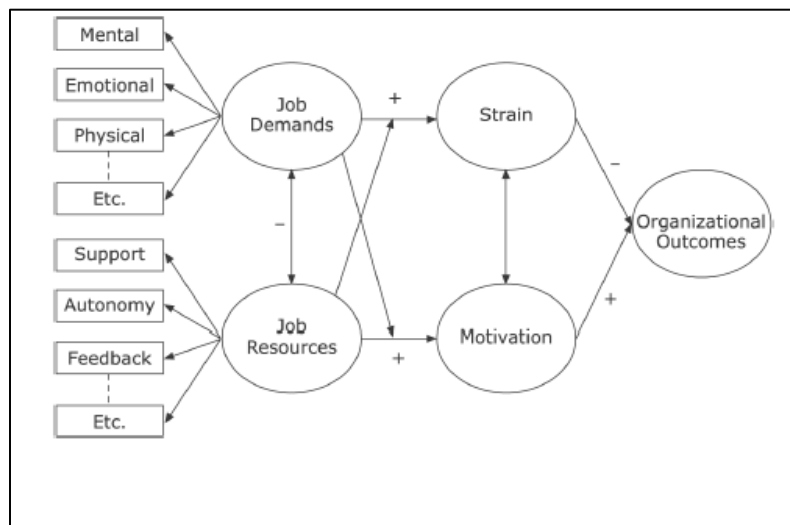


Figure 1. – The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007)

In the first process, job demands such as health impairment processes, poorly designed jobs or chronic job demands will exhaust employees' mental and physical resources and this in turn

will lead to depletion of energy (exhaustion) and to health problems (Demerouti et al, 2000, 2001a, b; Leiter, 1993). In the second process, the JD-R model assumes that job resources have motivational potential and can lead to high work engagement, low cynicism and excellent performance. Job resources have two motivational roles : 1) intrinsic because they foster employees' growth, learning and development, which can be considered to be fulfilling basic human needs (Deci and Ryan, 1985) such as the need for autonomy (DeCharms, 1968), competence (White, 1959) and relatedness (Baumeister and Leary, 1995); 2) extrinsic, because they help to achieve goals especially when work environments are able to provide many resources, which can foster an individual's willingness to put in the effort to accomplish the work task.

### **Interactions between job demands and resources**

The JD-R model proposes that the interaction between job demands and resources is instrumental to the development of job strain and motivation. That is, job resources may buffer the impact of job demands on job strain (Bakker et al, 2003c). This buffer hypothesis is in line with what Kahn and Byosserie (1992) found. These researchers argued that the buffer effect can occur between any pair of variables in a stress-strain sequence. They claimed that properties of work situations, as well as characteristics of an individual, can buffer the effects of a stressor. Others have suggested social support as a buffer for job strain (Haines et al, 1991; Johnson and Hall, 1988). Characteristics of work situations such as role clarity, performance feedback and job autonomy (Kahn and Byosserie, 1992), can act as moderators for job strain.

## **Evidence for the JD-R Model**

### **Dual Process**

Bakker et al (2003a) applied the JD-R model to call centre employees of a Dutch telecom company and investigated its predictive validity for self-reported absenteeism and turnover intentions. They found that job demands (such as work pressure, computer problems, emotional demands and changes in tasks) were the most important predictors of health problems which were related to sickness absence. As for job resources (such as social support, supervisory coaching, performance feedback and time control), they reported that only predictors of dedication and organizational commitment which in turn were related to turnover intentions. These findings were comparable to the research conducted by Hakanen et al (2006), who found that burnout mediated the effect of job demands on ill-health and work engagement mediated the effect of job resources on organizational commitment.

Demerouti et al (2001a) conducted a study that utilised both self-reports and observer ratings of job demands and resources. They found strong and consistent for the validity of the JD-R model. Job demands were primarily and positively related to exhaustion, whereas job resources were primarily and negatively related to disengagement from work. In another research, Bakker et al (2004) examined the relationship between job characteristics, burnout and other ratings of performance. They reported that job demands such as work pressure and emotional demands were the most important antecedents of the exhaustion component of burnout, which in turn predicted in-role performance. Job resources (such as autonomy and social support) were the most important

predictors of extra-role performance, through their relationship with engagement and disengagement from work.

Bakker and Demerouti (2007) concluded, based on the evidence presented above, job demands and resources were responsible for the two processes. Job demands were related to strains such as lack of energy and development of health problems, and job resources were related to motivation, such as engagement or disengagement towards work and commitment. They proposed that the combination of the two processes leads to employees developing strain and motivation when both job demands and resources are high. Conversely when job demands and resources are low, there is an absence of strain and motivation. (See Figure 2. below)

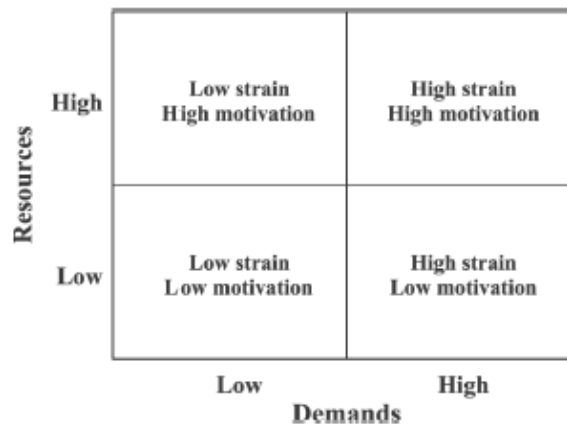


Figure 2. – Predictions of the Job Demands-Resources model based on additive effects (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007)

### **Buffer effect**

Bakker et al (2005), in their study of, 1000 employees in a higher education institution, found that high job demands and low job resources predicted burnout. They also found that work



overload, emotional demands, physical demands and work-home interference did not result in high levels of burnout if employees had autonomy, received feedback, had social support, or had a high quality relationship with their supervisor. Xanthopoulou et al (2006) tested the JD-R interaction hypothesis among employees from two home care organizations. They found that patient harassment interacted with autonomy and support predicting exhaustion; and with autonomy, support and professional development in predicting cynicism. They concluded that autonomy was an important buffer for job demands for both burnout dimensions (exhaustion and cynicism), followed by support and opportunities for professional development.

### **Workplace bullying and JD-R**

As it has been established that the JD-R model, unlike the DCM and the ERI models, can be used in various types of job demands and resources, what then would the effect of the application of the JD-R model to workplace bullying? To evaluate workplace bullying from the perspective of the JD-R model, researchers can use the work environment hypothesis. The work environment hypothesis which states that stressful and poorly organized environments may give rise to conditions resulting in bullying (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Einarsen, Raknes & Matthiesen, 1994; and Leyman, 1996). This is to say that bullying primarily can be caused by factors that are related to deficiencies in work organizations and the behaviours of leaders within these organizations (Einarsen 2000, Leyman 1990, 1996). For example, Hauge, Skogstad and Einarsen (2007) used the work environment hypothesis to test the relationship between job stressors and leadership to see whether these were possible predictors of bullying at work. Using a representative sample (n=2539) from a Norwegian workforce, the researchers found that role conflicts, interpersonal conflicts, and tyrannical and laissez-faire leadership behaviours were strongly related

to bullying. In addition, there was an interaction between decision authority and role conflicts at different levels of laissez-faire leadership. Other researchers have also found that autocratic leadership can result in leaders becoming bullies (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; O'Moore, 2000; and Vartia, 1996).

It has to be noted that some characteristics of the work environment may have direct influence on bullying while others create a stressful work climate that allows bullying to thrive. (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). For example, when there are power structures and power imbalances in organizations, the likelihood of employees being bullied by their supervisors tends to increase (Cortina et al, 2001; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Knorz & Zapf, 1996; O'Moore, 2000; and Zapf et al, 1996). One form of power imbalance can be created by situational or contextual characteristics (Cleveland & Kerst, 1993). For example, power differences associated with traditional gender roles and minority status may affect bullying behaviour as assumptions can be made that women and minorities deserves less power and status. For example, women have been reported to experience more victimisation than men (Cortina et al, 2001; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; and Zapf et al, 1996). Minorities such as 'non-white' ethnic groups (Hoel & Cooper, 2000) and LGBT and disabled employees (Fevre, Nichols, Prior et al, 2009 and Grainger and Fitzner 2007) are more likely to be victims of workplace bullying. It is clear that the existence of organizational differences are connected to the power differences within society and that these perpetuate bullying. Therefore to eliminate power imbalances in the organization, organizational policies and practices regarding discrimination towards vulnerable groups need to be changed as this will in turn reduce the occurrence of workplace victimisation.

Bullying and other forms of anti-social behaviour can occur when employees are dissatisfied and frustrated with their working situation or when they are constrained by organizational climates, for example, a lack of autonomy over one's own job (Einarsen et al, 1994; Spector, 1997; Vartia, 1996; Zapf et al, 1996), no clear goals (Vartia, 1996), and role conflict and ambiguity (Einarsen et al, 1994; Spector 1997). All these create dissatisfaction, irritation, low tolerance when employees do not have clarity about what is required of them and when they do not have control of their work which in turn become necessary conditions for bullying. It has also been reported that when employees are subjected to a high degree of stress, more bullying takes place (Appelberg, Romanov, Honlasalo & Koskenvuo, 1991; Einarsen et al, 1994; Hoel & Copper, 2000). This is because when employees are stressed, they become more dissatisfied with their jobs and more aggressive towards others, thus resulting in an increase of interpersonal conflicts (Pearson et al, 2000).

It is clear from all the research mentioned above that workplace bullying can be exacerbated by job demands on and resources to employees in organizations. For organizations to counteract bullying, it is necessary for them to consider how they can improve their organizational climates. The following paragraph will focus on how a psychological safety climate, when handled appropriately, can reduce workplace bullying.

#### **1.11.5. Psychosocial Safety Climate**

According to Dollard and Bakker (2010, p 580), Psychological Safety Climate (PSC) is defined as:

*“Organisational policies, practices, and procedures for the protection of worker psychological health and safety.”*

The concept of PSC is an organizational construct. It is how employees perceive management's commitment to protect their psychological health and safety. (Dollard and Bakker, 2010). Individuals' perceptions are based on how they view their working conditions, the organizational management system, pay structure, how the organizational environment encourages co-worker relationships and how individuals are treated fairly in the organization. (James et al, 2008). In other words, if the perception level of PSC is high, working conditions are conducive and individuals are well taken care of, so the likelihood of harassment or bullying is low. Conversely, if the level of perception of PSC is low, people are likely to be exposed to harassment and workplace bullying. This is in line with research done by Salin (2003) on the work environment hypothesis. She believes that when work environments are not ideal, they become a good breeding ground for harassment and workplace bullying. The wellbeing of individuals will be greatly affected when they perceive that the organization's policies and practices have failed them. However, when organizations have the right policies and practices in place, the wellbeing of employees can improve. Spector et al (2015) surveyed nurses in the following experimental categories: violence prevention climate (psychological climate); physical violence; verbal abuse exposure; strains of anger, anxiety, depression and physical symptoms approximately 6 and 12 months after their graduation. They found that when there is a high violence prevention climate, the likelihood of exposure to violence and abuse is reduced. This finding supports earlier research done by Yang, Spector, Chang, Gallant-Roman and Powell (2012), which found that violence prevention climate did predict the decrease of physical violence exposure nurses experienced over a six-month time period.

Some researchers have found that top down bullying occurs in organisations with low PSC contexts (Paice et al, 2004; Tuckey et al, 2009). Interestingly, those in top management within high PSC contexts will be the ones who will enact policies and procedures to prevent bullying (Heames and Harvey, 2006). Whatever commitments are made by senior management to ensure that PSC is effective in protecting employees from any psychosocial harm, researchers have found that these commitments will be best maintained by lower management (Zohar and Luria, 2005), perhaps because it ensures accountability. When organizational policies and standards are maintained, workplace bullying can be lowered over time (Bond et al, 2010). So when employees see that an organization allocates resources for their well-being, they are likely to be motivated and engaged at work (Blau, 1964; Maslach et al, 2001; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). In addition, PSC can act as a safety signal for employees to inform them of the available resources they can use to relieve themselves from workplace bullying or harassment (Lohr et al, 2007). When individuals perceive that their organization does not care about their wellbeing and that they are being exposed to harassment and workplace bullying, they are likely to respond in a few ways, for example, individuals will begin to feel demotivated and will eventually display job boredom (Fisher, 1993). This will eventually lead to loss of productivity (Drory, 1982), withdrawal (Spector et al., 2006), job dissatisfaction and attrition (Kass, Vodanovich, & Callender, 2001).

Bullying in the workplace has a major impact on both employees and organizations (Wilson, 1991; Bird & Beechler, 1995; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996; Tepper, Duffy, & Shaw, 2001). This has led to some organizations using personality questionnaires to identify bullies or psychopathic types, as there is a recognition that leaders of certain types may get away with inflicting harm upon employees (Kellerman, 2004). Kaiser and Hogan (2010) reported that leaders

displayed two types of personality: a bright and a dark side. The bright side of personality denotes leaders who are on their best behaviour in self-regulate and self-monitor their behaviours, whereas the dark side of personality is the dysfunctional aspects of those qualities. Although the use of personality questionnaires seems to be a good screening tool to identify bullies, it is not a panacea to prevent or eradicate bullying. This is because workplace bullying can be caused by other factors such as job design and organizational change (Salin and Hoel 2011). Workplace bullying cannot be eradicated even when organizational antecedents are identified. This is because these antecedents can be a product of situational factors that perpetuate bullying (as described by the work-environment hypothesis - Salin and Hoel, 2011) or when the design of an organizational element, by itself, creates bullying (also known as the 'organization-as-bully' - D'Cruz, 2012). When employees feel victimized by oppressive and unfair organizational practices and policies, bullying becomes institutionalized and may result in the depersonalization of these individuals (Liefvooghe and Mackenzie-Davey 2001; Einarsen et al. 2011). A reduction in workplace bullying lies within the responsibility of each organization, and this calls for the enactment of anti-bullying policies.

### **1.12. Enforcement of Anti-Bullying Policies**

How can workplace bullying be prevented? Even when organisations have workplace bullying policies, there is a need to identify who will enforce them and how. D'Cruz & Noronha (2009) looked at the role of Human Resources Management (HRM) in a target's ability to cope with workplace bullying. Using samples from call centres in Mumbai and Bangalore, the researchers found that HRM practices failed to protect the interests and well-being of bullied employees. Their finding seems to contradict the commonly held belief that HRM plays a

mediating role in the prevention of workplace bullying through procedures and policies (Lewis and Rayner, 2003). According to the Chartered Management Institute (CMI, 2008), although over 75% of UK organisations have anti-bullying policies, bullying in organisations remains high (Rayner, 2009). One possible reason that this is so could be that the mutual trust between bullied employees and their Human Resources Partner (HRP - those in-charge of enforcing the anti-bullying policies) has been violated (Searle and Skinner, 2011). According to trust theory, when a trustor places trust in another, the trustor essentially puts himself in a position of vulnerability through his belief that the other person will respond to his vulnerability with fairness and transparency (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; Searle et al, 2011a). Distrust ensues when the trustor's vulnerability and trust are violated. For example, an aggrieved employee distrusts a HRP when he is deprived of an opportunity to voice his grievances, (Baptise, 2008), his welfare is disregarded (Harrington and Rayner, 2011), is unfairly treated and is not shown any care when he trustingly shares his bullying experiences (Schoorman et al, 2007). Conversely, a HRP is not likely to trust an aggrieved employee if it has previously encountered negative experiences when confronting bullying managers or when an account of bullying provided by an aggrieved employee has been found to be untrue. All these mistrusts will hinder the enforcement of anti-bullying policies, which are supposed to protect employees, and will prevent bullied employees from being willing to report bullying experiences or report that those who are tasked to enforce anti-bullying policies are not doing their jobs. It is clear from all these that even in organizations with workplace bullying policies, there is no guarantee that individuals will be fully protected. It is widely recognized that legislation is necessary to ensure a guaranteed protection for victims to seek redress. However, whether organizations would follow such legislation remain to be seen.

### **1.13 Overall Summary**

Despite bullying in the workplace being an ubiquitous phenomenon, there are still areas of the subject that require clarification. For example, that the kind of behaviours that constitute workplace bullying are dependent on either an objective or subjective perspective of the phenomenon. How bullying behaviours in the workplace can be properly determined is something about which researchers in this area have not come to an agreement. This could be because workplace bullying, despite the fact that it is a devastating phenomenon in the workplace, does not have a standardized definition. This in turn leads into the issue of whether workplace bullying should be legislated against, or whether it should be left to organizations to self-govern. While some countries have started to take workplace bullying seriously with appropriate legislation to allow victims to seek redress and recompense, to have an anti-bullying policy in organizations remains uncommon. The few areas that researchers do agree upon include: the causes and antecedents of bullying in the workplace; the impact of workplace bullying to individuals and to organizations; and workplace bullying's transcendence of culture. In the next chapter, the discussion will focus on the cost of workplace bullying and the impact it has on both individuals and organizations.



## **CHAPTER 2 – The Cost Of Workplace Bullying**

### **2. The Cost Of Workplace Bullying**

#### **2.1 What is the Cost Of Workplace Bullying**

Workplace bullying can affect both individuals and organizations in very different ways. When individuals are bullied, they are presented with various options to deal with the bullies and the bullying episodes. They can choose to deal with the perpetrators head on, seek assistance through the organizational systems, litigate or leave. Whatever options individuals choose, they invariably come with a cost. These will in turn have a knock-on effect on their organizations. For example, the organizations will have to deal with the complaints, to make a decision to minimize or eradicate bullying, and to deal with litigious compensation and turnover. The reason why this chapter is included in this thesis is to highlight how workplace bullying can impact both individuals (those being bullied and those who witness bullying) and organizations. In doing so, the intention is to create awareness about how workplace bullying can impact both individuals and organizations, to examine the possible remedies that can be used and most importantly to indicate one vital area that most of the research in this area does not address – how victimised individuals, whether they have chosen to retaliate against the bully, leave the organisation or find other forms of strategies to evade bullying, manage the residual psychological impact of the experience.

In other words, as a result of the bullying, have bullied individuals become stuck in their thoughts, ruminating about their experiences and forced to enter into a vicious cycle of self-deprecation and self-blame, not able to move on with their lives? Why is this important? What

should one be concerned with how these victims think about their bullying experiences? It is because when individuals dwell on their bullying they will tend to yield to negative thoughts.

### **2.1.1. What are negative thoughts?**

A negative thought is defined as ‘*any distinct, identifiable cognitive event that is unwanted, unintended and recurrent. It interrupts the flow of thought, interferes in task performance, is associated with negative affect, and is difficult to control*’ (Clark & Rhyno, 2005, p4). Negative thoughts are experienced by more than 80% of the non-clinical population (Belloch, Morillo, Lucdero, Cabedo, & Carrió, 2004) which might typically include those who have experienced workplace bullying. It has been found that if intrusive negative thoughts are left unattended, they can develop into psychopathology (Clark & Rhyno, 2005). When bullied individuals begin to spend too much time ruminating, they are essentially fusing their thoughts and emotions. To rid themselves of such fusion, they will attempt to devise actions to suppress avoid their negative thoughts. This is a form of *experiential avoidance* (that is an attempt to control or alter the form, frequency, or situational sensitivity of thoughts, feelings, sensations or memories - Hayes, Wilson, Gifford, Follette, & Strosahl, 1996). However, these attempts are only typically temporary in effect, and negative thoughts will stealthily surface again so that these individuals will be forced to rethink and re-devise methods to suppress or try to diminish their negative thoughts. This becomes a vicious cycle and will only continue to suck these individuals into a maelstrom of negative thoughts for which there is no way out. What can these individuals do then to break themselves away from this psychological trap? Studies have shown that to help bullied individuals to alleviate negative thoughts, they will need to be taught how to defuse their thoughts and emotions. (De Young, Lavender, Washington, Looby, & Anderson, 2010; Hinton & Gaynor, 2010; Hooper &

McHugh, 2013; Hooper, Sandoz, Ashton & Clarke, 2012; Masuda, Feinstein, Wendell, & Sheehan, 2010; Masuda, Twohig, Stormo, Feinstein, Chou, & Wendell, 2010). Defusion of thoughts, or cognitive defusion, is process by which an individual learns how not to be enslaved by what seems to be the literal meaning of a word within a context, that is to say that a word should be taken as just that, a word. Cognitive defusion (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2012) is one of the six processes of the psychological flexibility model that forms the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy - ACT (see Figure 1).

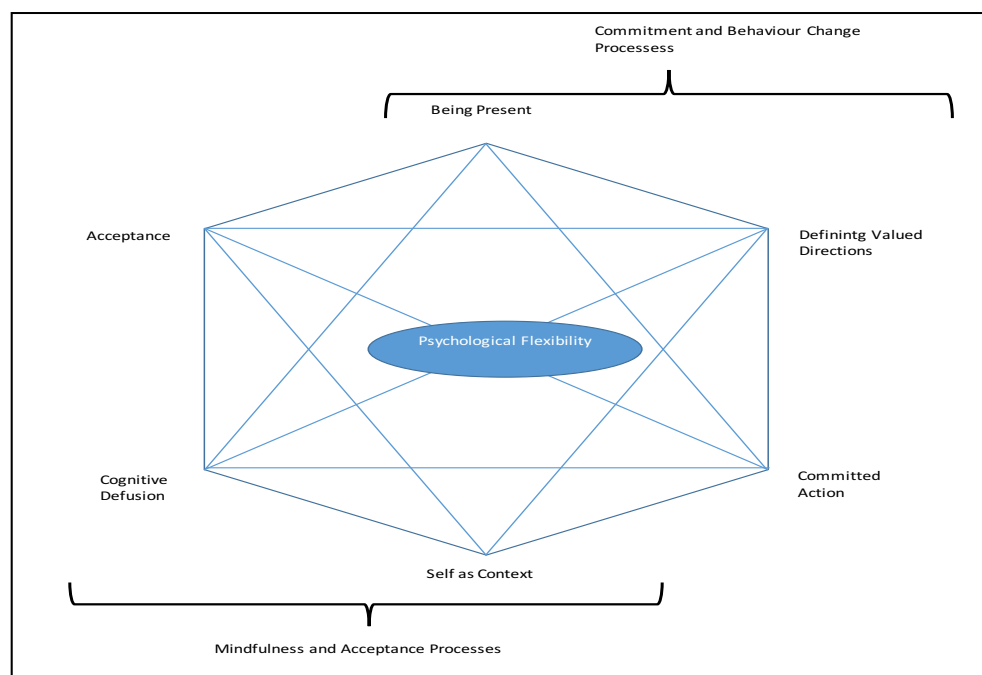


Figure 1 – Psychological Flexibility Model (p 63, Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2012)

This is one of the attributes that makes ACT particularly suitable for research as an intervention strategy to help bullied individuals. Research has shown that ACT is useful to help people who suffer from stress, anxiety, depression and psychosis, all of these are symptomatic to those who suffer from workplace bullying (Dahl & Wilson, 2004; Forman, Herbert, Moitra, Yeomans &

Geller, 2007; Lappalainen, Lehtonen, Skaro, Taubert, Ojanen & Hayes, 2007; Zettle and Hayes, 1986; Zettle and Rains, 1989). Chapter 4 of this thesis will look in depth at how ACT can be used as an intervention strategy.

In order to help individuals to help themselves, there is a need to understand the issues facing them when they are subjected to bullying in the workplace. To make distinct the impact of workplace bullying on individuals and organizations, this following sections of this chapter will be laid out in the following manner: impact on individuals; and impact on organizations.

## **2.2. Workplace Bullying – Impact On Individuals**

Under this section, the areas that will be discussed are

- psychological impact
  - mental wellbeing and health
  
- physical impact
  - coping strategies used by bullied individuals that affect their physical wellbeing
  - the physical attributes of individuals that exacerbate their feelings of being bullied
  
- professional impact
  - social standing
  - face loss
  - the impact of misbehaving in organizations as a consequence of being bullied
  - the impact of leaving organizations
  - the impact of litigation

- witnesses to bullying are included, as much research has shown that this group of individuals can be impacted by bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy & Alberts, 2007 and Vartia, 2001). The focus in this section will be:
  - impact of workplace bullying to witnesses
  - passive witnesses – Fear of taking a stand
  - active witnesses – Fearless to take a stand

## **2.2.1 Psychological Impact**

### **2.2.1.1 Mental Well-Being and Health**

Working in an environment where individuals are subjected to constant bullying can affect their health and well-being. Devonish (2014) indicated in his cross-sectional, self-report survey that workplace bullying exacerbates physical exhaustion, mental depression and rates of absenteeism. In a cohort study, Hansen, Gullander, Hogh, Persson, Kolstad, Wilert, Bonde, Kaerlev, Rugulies & Grynderup (2016) examined whether bullying increases the risk of sleep problems and whether leisure-time physical activity (LTPA) can moderate the associations between bullying and sleep problems. They found that workplace bullying was associated with awakening problems and a lack of restful sleep. They did not find any indication that LTPA moderates bullying and sleep problems. In earlier research done by Lallukka, Rahkonen & Lahelma (2011), it was found that workplace bullying was associated with sleep problems although the association attenuated when the social environment and the health of the participants were taken into account. Looking at the results of both studies, one message is clear – a working environment without bullying tends to be associated with slightly better sleep.

Being exposed to workplace bullying has also been found to have significant and positive relation to psychosomatic symptoms (de Meseguer, Soler, Sae, & Garcia, 2008).

Hogh, Hansen, Mikkelsen, & Persson (2012) in their research to test the association between exposure to negative acts at work, psychological stress-reactions and cortisol secretion, found that those who identified themselves as victims of bullying and those who were exposed to negative acts experienced both psychological and physiological stress responses. Different stress reactions were experienced by the participants when they were exposed to different types of negative acts indicating that some negative acts can be more detrimental than others. Another study that showed the detrimental impact of workplace bullying on the psychological wellbeing of individuals was that of Nielsen, Hetland, Matthiesen, & Einarsen (2012). In this two-wave longitudinal design (2 year follow up), the researchers examined the reciprocal associations between exposure to workplace bullying and symptoms of psychological distress. They were also interested to see how self-labelled victimization from bullying explains the effects of bullying on health. This was measured by looking at participants who self-labelled themselves as victims and others who reported that they had been exposed to bullying behaviour. The prevalence of psychological distress was found to be more significant for participants who self-labelled as victims than for those who were exposed to bullying behaviour over 2 years. As for the longitudinal effects of psychological distress, using a two-step logistic regression analysis, the researchers reported that both exposure to bullying behaviours and victimization from bullying were associated with psychological distress. This would suggest that psychological distress is the product of workplace bullying.

In addition, as bullying victims feel that do not have control of their working environment, position and work, they will find themselves in a heightened state of anxiety (Mowrer & Vick, 1948) that in turn creates stress.

According to Lazarus & Folkman (1984), psychological stress is '*the emotional response experienced when an environmental stimuli or event, which could endanger well-being, is perceived as exceeding a person's resources.*' So when individuals are bullied and when they are unable to find suitable resources to help them counteract the bullying, they are likely to feel psychologically distressed. What can these individuals do to help themselves reduce the psychological distress? Flaxman and Bond (2010) randomly assigned 311 government employees to worksite stress management training (SMT) and allocated them into two different groups: one group received Acceptance and Commitment Therapy training (n=177) and the control group received no training (n=134). The SMT training consisted of three half-day training sessions in which the participants were taught a mixture of mindfulness and values-based action skills. They found that across a 6-month assessment period, those who received the SMT programme had a significant reduction in distress. From the results shown by Flaxman and Bond (2010), an SMT programme based on ACT can be useful for, and applicable to, those who suffer psychological distress as a result of workplace bullying.

It has been found that the way leaders portray themselves and lead can affect the psychological well-being of their employees, especially in the context of workplace bullying. When individuals are led by authentic (Laschinger, Wong & Grau, 2012) and transformational (Kelloway, Turner, Barling, & Loughlin, 2012) leaders, their psychological well-being and their

trust in their leaders can mediate their intentions to leave their organizations and increase their job satisfaction, because such leaderships foster trust and conducive environments that encourage collaboration and discourage bullying. Conversely, if individuals are led by a tyrannical leader, they are likely to experience frustration, stress, helplessness and lowered self-esteem, and all these can eventually affect the individuals, both psychologically and physically (Ashforth, 1994). These can result in them suffering from sleep disturbances, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder and psychosomatic symptoms, lowered well-being and job satisfaction, self-deprecation, and suicidal ideation (Niedhammer, David, & Degioanni, 2006; Brodsky, 1976; Einarsen and Raknes, 1997; Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2002a; Carter, Thompson, Crampton, Morrow, Buford, Gray & Illing, 2013; O'Donnell & MacIntosh, 2016).

Although there has been a great deal of research indicating the psychological impact of bullying on individuals, the majority unfortunately have been unable to provide any causal link. This is because most research has been conducted using convenience sample and self-reporting. There has been little research that has been able to identify a causal relation between workplace bullying and its impact on individuals. One research, however, has found a clear causal relationship. This is a cohort study conducted by Romanov, Appelberg, Honkasalo & Koskenvuo (1996). This was a 4-6 year follow up study of 15,530 Finnish employees aged 24 to 64 years who were studied in a prospective follow up: 4 years for all psychiatric hospitalizations, 5 years for suicide, and 6 years for long-term medication due to chronic psychosis. The researchers reported that the association between interpersonal conflict (based on the research conducted by Appelberg, Romanov, Heikkila, Honkasalo, & Koskenvuo, 1996) (bullying has been interpreted as a form of escalated interpersonal conflict – Zapf and Einarsen, 2005) at work and physician-diagnosed



psychiatric morbidity was significant and similar for both sexes. It is understandable why there are not many studies like that of Ramanov et al (1996); the sheer amount of time, cost and manpower required, and a need to find such a large sample, for such a longitudinal study is a great deterrent.

There is a need for organizations to recognize the detrimental psychological effect of workplace bullying and to start to treat workplace bullying as an important topic within the workplace and employee wellness curriculum. Following this discussion of how workplace bullying can impact on an individual's psychological wellbeing, the next section will on the physical impact of workplace bullying on bullied individuals, and how that can contribute to a downward spiral of negative, counterproductive coping strategies. When individuals start to apply strategies to help them to counteract the bullying they experience, they are essentially looking for quick and short-lived ways to forget or suppress their experience. However, while these strategies may be useful and workable in the first instance, they eventually become issues in themselves that will only lead to increased stress for these individuals to deal with.

## **2.2.2 Physical Impact**

### **2.2.2.1 Coping strategies used by bullied individuals that affect their physical wellbeing**

Why is there a need to understand how workplace bullying can affect bullied individuals physically? As it has been stated, when individuals are being bullied they feel stressed. When individuals are stressed at work, they can also start to experience pain such as in the neck, shoulders and back, all of which can result in strained and tense muscles (Dahl & Wilson, 2004). Being afflicted with all this, bullied individuals will resort to common remedies such as sick leave, bed

rest, the use of hot or cold therapy, analgesic medication, acupuncture and massage. However, these have been shown to have little or no long-term benefit (Vingård & Nachemson, 2000). In extreme cases, when bullied individuals are unable to take a stand and do something about their predicament such as by confronting their bullies, reporting the bully to the organization or leaving the organization, they are likely to choose other practical measures to deny or forget the bullying. These can include: the use of alcohol (Freels, Richman & Rospenda, 2005; Rospenda, Fujishiro, Shannon, & Richman 2008); the use of drugs; bingeing on food (Townend, 2008) or engaging in unsafe sexual practices (Folkman, Chesney, Pollack & Phillips, 1992). These behaviours are what Cooper, Liukkonen & Cartwright (1996) classified as 'poor lifestyle habits'. When individuals acquire such habits as a form of temporary relief, engaging in these types of activities does not eradicate the bullying behaviours, which means that the victims will succumb to a vicious cycle of being bullied, coping and being bullied again. When workplace bullying has become the norm and an accepted way of interaction, the bullied victims find it difficult to report the abuse. (Leymann, 1990; Rayner, Hoel & Cooper, 2002). When bullied individuals subscribe to these strategies to escape the bullying and that stresses that accompany such misbehaviour, they, in reality, are subjecting themselves to another plethora of issues that can impact them physically. For example, when individuals resort to the use of drugs (Neidhammer, David, Degioanni, Drummond & Philip, 2011, Traweger, Kinzl, Traweger-Ravanelli & Fiala 2004, Lalluka, Haukka, Partonen, Rahkonen, & Lehelma, 2012), alcohol (Giorgi, 2010), food bingeing (Streigel-Moore, Dohm, Pike, Wilfley, & Fairburn, 2002) and unsafe sexual practices (Stall, Paul, Greenwood, Pollack, Bein, Crosby, Mills, Binson, Coates & Catania, 2001) as a form of escape from, and suppressant of, workplace bullying, the overuse and overindulgence of these forms of temporary

relief can result to over-reliance and eventual addiction. In this instance, now the bullied individual not only has to deal with the bullying but also the addiction. See below Diagram 1 and Diagram 2.

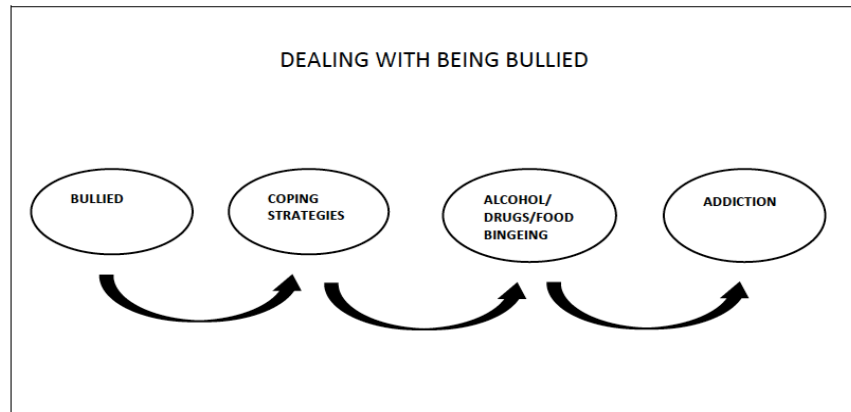


Diagram 1 – Dealing with being bullied

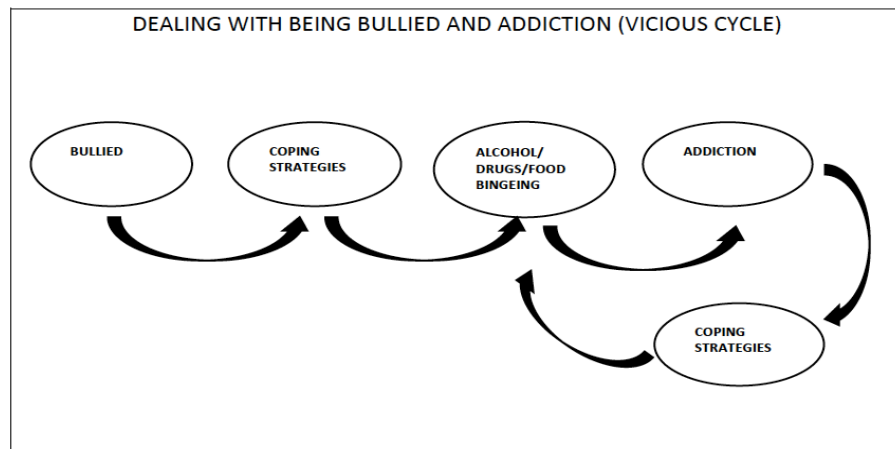


Diagram 2 – Dealing with being bullied and addiction

In other words, while these individuals believe that they are able to escape the psychological impact of workplace bullying, they have, in actual fact, exchanged one detrimental impact for another. When such behaviours repeat themselves, these individuals will be stuck in a vicious cycle from which they are unlikely to see any way out.

It is, therefore, imperative that such individuals find a way to escape this cycle, stop running away from their bullying and instead look at how they are relating to the bullying. They will need a way to stand outside this cycle and gain independence from the bullying and the emotional baggage that comes with it.

#### **2.2.2.2 The physical attributes of individuals that exacerbate their feelings of being bullied**

Factors that can cause individuals to be bullied and stressed in ways that can affect their psychological well-being, are their physical attributes such as being overweight or suffering from morbid obesity. According to the weight-based social identity threat model, an obese individual will experience increased physiological stress, reduced psychological well-being and avoidance of stigmatizing situations, and will engage in behaviours that discourage weight loss so as to avoid the stigma of being labelled an obese person (Hunger, Major, Blodorn, & Miller, 2015). These researchers reported that when individuals are put in situations which heighten their psychological state, they are likely to think that they are being devalued, discriminated against, rejected or negatively stereotyped because of their weight. Three situations have been identified that can activate weight-based social identity threats: discrimination that is experienced directly by an individual who is overweight; suspected discrimination, such as wondering whether a job rejection was connected to being overweight; or anticipated discrimination when meeting someone for the first time.

These forms of stigmatization and social identity threats have similar effects as those shown in previous research done on race/gender and sexual orientation (Lick, Durson, & Johnson, 2013; Major, Mendes & Dovidio, 2013; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Williams & Mohammad, 2009).

The effects are the impact on their mental and psychological health. These effects are shown also in research on those who are being bullied in the workplace due to their race, sexual orientation and gender. (Townend, 2008, Lewis & Gunn, 2007, Hoel, Lewis & Einarsdóttir, 2014). For example, in the case of *Bickerstaff v Butcher* [2014] WL 10246872 (Case Ref: 92/14) that was brought to the Northern Ireland Industrial Tribunal, the claimant, Mr Bickerstaff was found to have been harassed for his condition of morbid obesity, which was considered by the tribunal as a disability. The tribunal unanimously decided that the claimant was disabled within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 c. 50 and that the bullying and harassment as a result of his disability constituted harassment by the respondent, Gerard Butcher. The claimant has been subjected from April 2011 until to derogatory comments made to others about him such as: ‘so fat that he could hardly walk’ and ‘so fat that he could hardly feel a knife being stuck to him’. Abusive language had also been used such as ‘fat cunt’ and ‘fat bastard’. The claimant had been subjected to this vile behaviour by the respondent on a daily basis and a prolonged period, and this has affected him psychologically which resulted in sickness absence.

In a research done by Jackson, Kirschbaum & Steptoe (2016), 563 non-smoking obese individuals, aged 50 and over who had participated in the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing – ELSA were surveyed on their experience of weight discrimination. A sample of hair at least of 2 cm in length, representing two months’ worth of growth, was collected and tested for cortisol levels. They reported that individuals who had experienced weight discrimination had mean hair cortisol concentrations 33% higher than those who had not experienced weight discrimination. High cortisol levels found in hair are a biomarker for chronic stress exposure. The findings of Jackson et al align with those of Hunger et al (2015).

Others have found that being discriminated because of weight can cause stress that can trigger involuntary physiological, cognitive, emotional and behavioural reactions (Major, Eliezer & Rieck, 2012). These reactions are similar to those that are found as a consequence of workplace bullying (Hogh, Mikkelsen, & Hansen, 2011, Hogh, Hansen, Mikkelsen, & Persson, 2012, Nielsen et al, 2012), which are detrimental to the overall wellbeing of these individuals (Cox, Griffith & Rial-Gonzalez, 2000).

When individuals are discriminated against because of their physical attributes, they are being subjected to bullying which affects their overall wellbeing. When individuals are affected by bullying in the workplace because of their physical attributes, or have resorted to coping strategies to alleviate their experiences, this can also affect their professional standing in organizations. The Guardian on 26 October 2016, gave an example of how workplace bullying affected the professional careers of successfully individuals (‘NHS bullying ruined career of healthcare professionals’ ). To understand how workplace bullying can affect the professional status of bullied individuals, the following sections will look at research in social standing, face loss, the impact of misbehaving in organizations as a consequence of being bullied, the impact of leaving organisations, and the impact of litigation.

### **2.2.3 Professional Impact**

#### **2.2.3.1 Social Standing**

Individuals exposed to high levels of bullying behaviours have been found to experience low self-esteem (Harvey & Keashly, 2003; O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001; Igelsias & de Bengoa Vallejo,

2012). This can diminish their social standing in the workplace and can result in the loss of face. When individuals feel that their social status has been compromised, to avoid further embarrassment, they are likely to do various things:

- find ways to salvage their lost reputation, by:
  - feeling positive about themselves
  - creating a façade that they are in control of the situation
  - talking to other people to garner support
- leave the organization

They may choose to leave the organizations as a last resort so as not to suffer further impact on their professional image and status or because they feel helpless and no longer in control of their situation (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Lewis, 2004; Salin, 2003).

#### **2.2.3.2 Face Loss**

The likelihood of victims of workplace bullying being fully open about their experiences can only be considered as slight. This has been attributed to rule governed behaviour (Skinner, 1966). An individual may behave in a certain way because of a rule he or she has learned (that acts as an antecedent to a behaviour) that this may elicit a consequence. Putting this in the context of workplace bullying, the speaking (the behaviour) about workplace bullying may bring about shame (the consequence). Shame is defined as the emotional core of the experience of a stigma (Luoma, Kohlenberg, Hayes & Fletcher, 2012) and has been associated with the fused belief of being flawed or unlovable (Matos, Pinto-Gouveia, & Gilbert, 2013). When an individual experiences

shame, he or she would be more likely to be disengaged socially (Dorahy, 2010), to have narrow perspective and to have negative thoughts about the self (Matos, Pinto-Guoveia, & Gilbert, 2013). According to Hu (1944), face - '*mianzi*' (面子), is a social status that is acquired through achievements and efforts that elevates a person's social standing within a group. So when individuals admit to being bullied, they are essentially losing face - '*mei mianzi*' (沒面子) thus diminishing their social status.

These bullied individuals, for fear of losing their status, can begin to view themselves more positively than others do, thus creating a positive illusion (Taylor and Brown, 1988). In this way, they are attempting to ignore the bullying they experience. When individuals create positive illusions, they have 1) unrealistic positive views of themselves; 2) exaggerated perceptions of personal control; and 3) unrealistic optimism. While these views can be argued as unrealistic and illusory, they seem to help individuals to be more attuned, or cognizant, of their strengths than to focus on their weaknesses (Taylor and Brown, 1988). In the context of workplace bullying, this may indeed be helpful, more so when individuals are desperate to save their own reputation. Such individuals will look at or use their own strengths to navigate out from the negative experience of bullying, for example to gain control of the situation by confronting the bully or by putting a stop to the bullying. To view themselves as more positive than others in a bullying situation, which may be stressful on its own, as these individuals need to be constantly projecting a positive façade, may seem to be a counterintuitive strategy. However, it has been shown that being positive is associated with reduced stress (Helgeson & Taylor, 1993; Reed, 1989). This can have a strong impact on the self-esteem of these bullied individuals and can also affect how they feel about themselves. (Barkow, 1975; Frank, 1985; Heaven, 1986; Leary, Cottrell & Philips, 2001; Raskin Novacek &



Hogan, 1991). It has been found that to avoid being isolated and to obviate threats to personal standing, individuals who have been bullied, will choose to be present at work, even when they are sick. (Janssens, Clays, De Clercq, De Bacquer, Casini, Kittel, & Braeckman, 2016). This type of sick presenteeism is by itself problematic because when people work when they are sick and not fully recuperated, they are likely to be at risk of future poor health and physical complaints, (Bergström, Bodin, Hagberg, Lindh, Aronsson, & Josephson, 2009; Gustafsson & Marklund, 2011) mental health problems, exhaustion and burn out (Demerouti, le Blanc, Bakker, Schaufeli, & Hox, 2009; Lu, Cooper, & Lin, 2013; Lu & Lin, 2013; Conway, Hogh. Rugulies, & Hansen, 2014; Tayloan, Aronsson, Leineweber, Hanson, Alexanderson, & Westerlund, 2012). Invariably, trying to maintain face and social standing can backfire and result in health complications which will only contribute further to diminish the social standing of an individual in an organization.

How would those who are not able to create positive illusions deal with workplace bullying? The fear of confronting the issue of being bullied because of not wanting to lose face, and in order to maintain social status, only creates a barrier in such cases to address bullying openly.

So, what would individuals have to do instead to ensure that the organizations they work for take notice of the predicament they are in? One of the ways, they might seek to get attention is to resort to behaving in a counterproductive way. In the next section, the focus will be on what the impacts are when bullied individuals resort to misbehaving in the organizations to create awareness about their plight.

### 2.2.3.3 The impact of misbehaving in organizations as a consequence of being bullied

Should individuals decide to share their experiences, they can be received with scepticism and disbelief (Leymann, 1996; O'Moore, Lynch & Daeid et al, 2003).

When this happens, feeling aggrieved and disappointed that they are not able to find support from colleagues, peers or even the organization they work for, some resort to misbehaving to get attention (Field, 1996). This type of behaviour is known as counterproductive work behaviour (CWB). Rotundo & Spector (2010) define CWB as '*the intentional behaviour by employees that harms or intends to harm organizations, organizational members or both.*' These behaviours can take a variety of forms, including (but not limited to) aggression, interpersonal conflict, sabotage, theft, wasting time and/or materials, spreading rumours, refusing to cooperate, and physical assault (Penney & Spector, 2002). Individuals who are treated badly at work such as by being bullied, have been found to react with counterproductive work behaviour towards other and their organization (Hershcovis, Turner, Barling, Arnold, Dupré, Inness et al, 2007; Penney & Spector, 2005). In the event that aggrieved individuals are unable to find support during the course of their ordeal or whose organizations fail to do anything, individuals will view this as organizational injustice and they may retaliate with counterproductive work behaviour (Greenberg, 1990). However, in doing so, they put themselves in danger of being dismissed from their work, which in turn can contribute further to their diminished social and professional status. The loss status and face can be further moderated by the fact that when individuals are exposed to negative work behaviours at work, their quality of work can also be affected and they are likely to make more errors (Rosenstein & O'Daniel, 2008, Rosenstein & O'Daniel, 2006; Rowe & Sherlock, 2005; Sofield & Salmond, 2003). Thus, for those who have achieved a certain level of status in

hierarchical organizations, being bullied at work can have a knockon effect on their overall work performance. While on one hand, they might believe in being counterproductive is a way to get attention from the organization about their bullying experience, on the other hand to adopt these counterproductive behaviours can create a plethora of stress related issues, such as increased lack of confidence at work, low self-esteem, physical and psychological pains (Griffin, O'Leary, & Collins, 1998). It can also lead individuals to eventually resign from their work (O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew, 1996). When individuals decide to leave their organizations, they are faced with issues that only further add to the existing repercussions of workplace bullying.

#### **2.2.3.4 The impact of leaving organizations**

When bullied individuals decide to leave the organizations they work for, this decision can be considered as a two-edged sword. On the one hand, the bullying experience individuals have faced ceases. On the other hand, in choosing to leave, individuals will find themselves dropped into another vexing situation – the loss of job and income (Gordon & Risley, 1999). As a form of quick fix to their situation, desperate individuals are likely to choose to leave even when they do not have another job to go to. It has to be noted that decisions like this are not made whimsically or flippantly. The Hirschman's model of ELVN (Hirschman, 1970), may be useful to explain how individuals come to such decisions as this model has been widely used to explain why people choose to leave when they have exhausted ways of dealing with workplace bullying. As described by Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers & Mainous (1988) the ELVN model is formulated as follows:

**Exit**—formally separating, moving out of a joint residence, deciding to "just be friends," getting a divorce.

**Voice**—discussing problems, compromising, seeking help from a therapist or clergyman, suggesting solutions to problems, asking the partner what is bothering him or her, trying to change oneself or change the partner.

**Loyalty**—waiting and hoping that things will improve, "giving things some time," praying for improvement.

**Neglect**—ignoring the partner or spending less time together, refusing to discuss problems, treating the partner badly emotionally or physically, criticizing the partner for things unrelated to the real problem, "just letting things fall apart," (perhaps) developing extra relationship sexual involvements.

Applying the model to bullying in the workplace, a likely response is to voice out to ensure that concerns are heard (Voice) while hoping that the organization will do something about it. Individuals who are loyal to the organisations they work for will be hopeful that their organizations will do something, thus they may be patient and wait for improvement to their situation (Loyal). If they feel that nothing is being done, the next step is for them to retaliate by neglecting their work such as not being responsible, being late or absent from work (Neglect). If showing neglect fails to work, individuals may choose to exit as a last resort (Exit).

The EVLN model is an important framework that is used to describe how employees respond to job dissatisfaction. The model shows how employees will use a form of fight-flight dichotomy to respond to their job dissatisfaction like those who are being bullied at work. This can be seen in the study conducted by Zapf and Gross (2001). These researchers used both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate how individuals deal with conflict escalation and cope with workplace bullying. They conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with victims and a questionnaire study with 149 victims and 81 individuals in a control group. What they found was

that those who were interviewed shared that they would initially adopt conflict solving strategies, then change their strategies several times before deciding to leave the organization, having come to believe that, perhaps, that conflict management strategies might not be the right approach to counteract workplace bullying. On the other hand, victims who were surveyed chose an approach of conflict avoidance as a passive strategy so as to avoid using direct strategies and will change their behaviour so as to de-escalate the bullying. From this study, a few conclusions can be made.

Firstly, bullying in the workplace can be considered as an escalated conflict situation which is in line with the previous study conducted by Einarsen and Skogstad (1996). But is treating workplace bullying as a conflict management issue the right way to reduce bullying in the workplace? Zapf and Gross suggest that the use of both active (such as confronting bullies) and passive (such as avoidance, which can weaken the victim's position which in turn enhances the bully's position) strategies are not the best solutions. This is also supported by research done by Aquino (2000) and Rayner (1999) that active strategies and confrontation can only result in increased victimization and retaliation from the bully. Hence, ultimately, victims will choose to leave an organization as the best strategy to escape from the conflict and the bullying.

#### **2.2.3.5 The impact of litigation on individuals**

When bullied individuals are embroiled in litigation with their organizations, they can choose to leave or can be asked to leave immediately. Either way, they may be put in a situation in which they will not have time to look for a new job or have a job to go to (Leymann, 1992). When individuals have decided to go down the path of litigation, they are faced with prolonged and complex legal processes which will put them in a very precarious position. This is so because of

the loss of their source of income (Gordon & Risley, 1999) when they leave their work and the uncertainty of the outcome of their litigation. When individuals are unemployed, their lives can be altered dramatically, which can affect their psychological health. For example, Paul & Moser (2009) in their meta-analysis of 237 cross-sectional studies (that comprised 458, 820 participants) found that unemployed individuals had significantly lower levels of psychological health than employed individuals. Other research has found that unemployment can lead to the suicide of those who are unemployed (Classen & Dunn, 2011; Chen, Chou, Lai & Lee, 2010).

Apart from dealing with the impacts of workplace bullying, such as stress and depression, individuals will also need to contend with negative effects of being unemployed. They will hope that their litigation will be successful. Unfortunately, the whole process of litigation is far from being simple and often victims who seek judicial redress do not necessarily find immediate relief. For example:

- In the case of *Majrowski v Guy's and St Thomas's NHS Trust* [2006] UKHL 34, the respondent Majrowski was an audit co-ordinator for Guy's and St Thomas's NHS Trust and made a claim against his employer for the harassment and bullying he suffered under his line manager for 18 months, which he alleged contravened section 1 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. The court found the employer was vicariously liable for the harassment and bullying of one employee by another. While he did not suffer any lasting psychological illness, finding someone to represent him was not easy despite him approaching a large number of solicitors (Guardian, 2005). The whole process took 8 years, from the time he made his first complaint to his employer until he was compensated.

- In 2011, Licia Faithful, an employee of an insurance company, AXA PPP Healthcare Ltd, was awarded £142,000 for an 18-month ordeal of racial bullying, hurt feelings, personal injury and discrimination. She was mocked about her accent and was called, “SpongeBob SquarePants” (a cartoon character). She was constantly mocked about her voice and discriminated against for being South American. (*Licia Faithful v AXA PPP*). Licia worked with AXA PPP Healthcare Ltd from 2006 to 2008. She left the organization in an emotional state as a result of the treatment and bad experience she had suffered, that resulted in her being unable to perform basic household tasks. She waited for 3 years to be compensated.

While both of these cases cited were ruled in favour of the victims, and they were both compensated accordingly, both had to endure much stress whilst waiting for a positive outcome for their litigations. When individuals are going through a litigation process, they will often also have to face concurrently the effects that the workplace bullying has had on them, such as mental depression (Devonish, 2014) and sleep problems (Hansen, Gullander, Hogh, Persson, Kolstad, Wilert, Bonde, Kaerlev, Rugulies, & Grynderup, 2016). They will need to seek professional help for these symptoms and might need to pay for treatment themselves if they are unable to get any insurance coverage from the organizations or from the state. When individuals are unable to pay for treatments themselves, they will have to rely on the support of their family members and friends, thus creating a burden for those who offer help and in turn resulting in strained relationships. It is therefore important for individuals to think carefully and be aware of the issues that will accompany a choice of the route of litigation to seek for compensation for their exposure to workplace bullying.

## **2.3 Witnesses To Bullying**

### **2.3.1 Impact of workplace bullying to witnesses**

Bullying can be done discreetly or openly for others to see. When bullying is done in the open, it can be considered as a form of political tactic used by bullies to exert power on the victims to achieve their personal goals (Ferris, Zinko, Brouer, Buckley, & Harvey, 2007, Salin, 2003a), a tactic by which they can gain an advantage over their victims (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988). Several studies have shown that there is a considerable percentage of people who have witnessed workplace bullying, ranging from 9% to 59 % (Quine, 1999; Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2001; Vartia, 2001; Salin, 2001; Cooper, Hoel and Faragher, 2004; Arroyo, Martinez and Pérez, 2004; Hansen et al, 2006; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy & Alberts, 2007; Magerøy, Lau, Riise, & Moen, 2009; Neidhammer, David, Degioanni, Drummond, Philip et al, 2009; Persson, Hogh, Hansen, Nordander, Ohlsson, Balogh, & Ørbæk, 2009; Namie and Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010; and Hansen, Hogh & Persson, 2011).

When bullying is done in the open or when it is witnessed by others, a triadic interaction forms between the bully, the victim and the bystander and they will all be affected by detrimental outcomes (Twemlow, Fonagy & Sacco, 2004). Even when individuals do not personally witness bullying, to hear accounts of bullying from the victims has an indirect impact on them like a ripple effect (Hoel and Cooper, 2000a, Hoel, Rayner & Cooper, 1999, Rayner, 1999).

Research has found that witnessing others being bullied can create some adverse effects. Lutgen-Sandvik et al (2007) and Vartia (2001) found that those who witnessed bullying reported



experiencing heightened levels of stress and low self-confidence. Witnessing bullying taking place in the workplace can also lead to witnesses choosing to leave an organization (Rayner, 1999). Sleep disturbances have been found to be a common effect on those who witness bullying. For example, Niedhammer et al (2009) in their cross-sectional study of 3,132 men and 4,562 women, reported that those who were bullied and those who witnessed bullying both experienced sleep disturbances. Another study conducted by Lallukka et al (2011) found that women who frequently reported witnessing bullying also indicated poorer sleep patterns after 5 years.

#### **2.3.1.1 Passive Witnesses – Fear of taking a stand**

Even if they want to, witnesses to bullying are unlikely to intervene and stop the bullying because they fear retaliation from the bullies and loss of their jobs if the bullying is condoned by supervisors (Bjørkelo, 2013; Shorenstein, 2007). In addition, it has been found that witnesses who have stepped up to intervene and try to stop bullies were three times more likely to become victims themselves than those who did not stand up against bullies. (Mathhiesen, Bjørkelo & Nielsen, 2008). All of these factors discourage witnesses from coming forward to help victims to stand up against bullies. This is despite the fact that research has shown that witnesses can play a pivotal role and have a positive impact on bullied victims because they can offer support to them and denounce the bullies (Gaffney, DeMarco, Hofmeyer, Vessey, and Budin, 2012). Whilst there are repercussions arising from intervention, being inert itself is more detrimental. Similarly, when individuals witness bullying taking place and do not intervene, because there is an assumption that someone else will intervene, they send out a message that they condone or support bullying (Lewis and Orford, 2005). Such a form of diffusion of responsibility is known as the Genovese or

Bystander effect (Darley and Lantané, 1968); in New York in 1964, 34 witnesses failed to intervene and did nothing to stop the brutal rape and murder of Kitty Genovese.

### **2.3.1.2 Active Witnesses – Fearless to take a stand**

In the reverse case, there are people who feel that when a significant moral standard has been violated, they need to react. This is known as deonance, a term coined by Folger (2001). Folger believes that under the deontic model of justice, people can be motivated to being judicial because they feel a sense of moral obligation to do the right thing. When individuals display deontic reactions, they are likely to experience intense feelings of moral indignation or anger towards the perpetrator of what they see as unfair treatment and will have strong motivations to restore the moral order that has been infringed (Folger, 2001; Folger et al, 2005). Workplace bullying in this instance can create a deontic state in witnesses because the bullying violates significant and entrenched moral norms regulating how others ought to treat one another in ways that preserve dignity and respect (Bies and Moag, 1986). Such witnesses feel a moral outrage at what they perceive as a double standard between how they are treated themselves and how those who are being bullied are treated (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998). One of the deontic reactions is retaliation, attempts to take action against someone who has committed a perceived wrongdoing (Miller and Vidmar, 1981; Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). Another deontic reaction is resistance, an active or passive act that attempts to disrupt or erode another social entity's base of power, such as showing turnover intentions, psychological withdrawal and quitting (Lawrence and Robinson, 2007; Lutgen- Sandvik, 2005; 2006). That is to say, from a deontic perspective, when witnesses to bullying show resistance to the bully or to the organization that has failed to reprimand the bully,

this is an act of moral obligation (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2005).

In summary, the impact of workplace bullying on individuals can be manifold – psychological, physical and professional. Although individuals can decide how to deal with bullying in their own ways, either by reducing contact with their bullies by being absent from work or leaving their organizations, there is a need to look at ways to ensure that bullying experiences do not cripple victims and prevent them being functional at work. That is a need to help them to improve their psychological wellbeing whilst they are working. This can be done by focusing on channelling their energies to become psychologically flexible, by not letting rumination, which can lead to stress, sickness and psychological issue and fear, prevent them from achieving what matters to them most. This is the focus of this PhD research.

## **2.4 Workplace Bullying – Impact To Organizations**

Under this section, the areas that will be discussed are

- sickness absenteeism
- loss of productivity
- turnover
- estimated costs of workplace bullying to organizations

### **2.4.1 Sickness Absenteeism**

One of the ways workplace bullying impacts on an organization is the increase rate of absence of its workers. When an individual is being bullied, one of the strategies adopted by an individual who is being bullied, even though it might not be effective, is to avoid the bully by just not turning up for work. People can also be absent from the workplace due to real cases of sickness as a result of the bullying they experience. This was reported by Kivimäki, Elovainio & Vathera (2000) in their study of Finnish hospital staff. They found that those who were bullied were 1.5 times more likely to report sick than those who were not bullied. Contrary to this study, Einarsen and Raknes (1991), in their study of the members of fourteen Norwegian trade unions, reported that bullying only represented a 1 percent of the variation in sickness absenteeism. However, more research has found a strong connection between sickness absenteeism and bullying at work. For example, Hoel and Cooper (2000a) found that bullied victims took on average seven days more absence from work due to sickness than those who were not bullied or who were witnesses to bullying. Vartia (2001) found that 17 percent of municipal employees took time off due to bullying. It has been reported that those who report sick due to workplace bullying tend to stay absent for a long period of time: UNISON (2000) reported 29 percent absent for more than thirty days and 13 percent absent for more than sixty days. This form of sickness absenteeism is clearly a matter of concern. Short or long-term sickness absence from work is disruptive to the functioning of organizations and can have a ripple effect on the service they provide (Seago, 1996).

In addition, sickness absence, as a strategy adopted by victims of bullying, is but a temporary solution. There is no guarantee that this type of strategy adopted by victims will minimise bullying

behaviour. In a worst case scenario, victims may experience far more intense bullying when they return to work.

#### **2.4.2 Loss of Productivity**

When individuals do not turn up to work, this can impact their organization in terms of productivity loss. In their research on health status and productivity loss, Mitchell and Bates (2011) used data from health risk appraisals to help them estimate the costs an employer has to bear. They estimated that an employer with 10,000 employees could face approximately \$3.8 million in productivity loss each year. This study is consistent with other studies that have found the connection between health risks and health conditions to productivity losses (Loeppke, Taitel, Haufle, Parry, Kessler & Jinnett, 2009; Mattke, Balakrishnan, Bergamo & Newberry, 2007; Goetzel, Long, Ozminkowski, Hawking, Wang & Lynch, 2004).

According to Samnani and Singh (2014), performance enhancing compensation practices which are designed to encourage employees to perform can also encourage workplace bullying. To be productive and rewarded for their performance, individuals may engage in bullying others to maximise their pay. The need to perform can lead individuals to feel stress and in trying to alleviate the stress, these individuals may impose their frustrations on others. In both situations, targets of bullying suffer in their work performance which will result in them being less productivity at work. Organizational intentions to reward individuals for their performance thus may inadvertently create a loss of productivity due to their employees leaving as a result of workplace bullying (Kerr, 1975).

When organizations are faced with a shortage of manpower, they are likely to resort to temporary solutions, such as imposing overtime for existing employees or engaging extra help to cover the work left by absent employees. In doing so this increases costs and can result in employees being overworked, feeling disgruntled and falling sick. Attempts to solve the problem using these methods result in a vicious cycle.

While the cost of productivity loss is an estimation based on data such as sick leave and medical reimbursements, organizations clearly face damage in their operations, their reputations, and the extra costs they incur due to turnover.

### **2.4.3 Turnover**

Research on employee turnover is not something new, rather an area of interest that started in the late 1950s. March and Simon (1958) theorised that turnover behaviours are affected by the two factors of ‘pull’ (as the perceived desire to leave) and ‘push’ (individuals’ belief that leaving the job is easy because of available job opportunities).

For organisations, the consequences of employee turnover can be two-fold: direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include recruitment and training costs which have been estimated to be 1.5 or 2.5 times an employee’s annual salary (Cascio, 2006). Indirect costs to organisations include the loss of talented workers and the disruption of the established work culture (Shaw, 2005). It is therefore imperative for organizations to understand the reasons and processes why employees want to leave as their departure will affect organizations’ productivity and can impede present and future organizational performance (Heavey, Holwerda, & Hausknecht, 2013). To understand

voluntary turnover, organizations will benefit from an understanding of the Unfolding Theory of Turnover Model (Lee & Mitchell, 1991).

The Unfolding Theory of Turnover Model has three main features. This model was created based on the Image Theory (Beach, 1990; Beach & Mitchell, 1990); it is a decision-making model that explains how people make decisions based on available alternatives which are represented by three different images. These images are: *The Strategic Image* (how things should go); *The Value Image* (what goals and outcomes are to be achieved by a specific timeframe); and *The Trajectory Image* (action plans). The model has two features – ‘script’ and ‘shock’. A ‘script’ is defined as a pre-existing plan of action and a ‘shock’ is a specific event that prompts people to leave (Lee & Mitchell, 1994, p60-61). According to this model, when people choose to leave, they do so taking four distinct decision paths. See Table 1 (Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel, & Hill, 1999).

<i>Shock</i>	<i>Script</i>	<i>Image violation</i>	<i>Satisfaction</i>	<i>Search/evaluate alternatives</i>	<i>Likely offer</i>	<i>Path*</i>
Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	No	No	1
Yes	No	Yes	N/A	No	No	2
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	3
No	No	Yes	No	No	No	4a
No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	4b

*\* In theory, no other routes are possible; any such null path would constitute theory falsification (Lee et al., 1999, p. 451).*

Those who have chosen Path 1 are likely to leave because of an event (shock) and they will plan extensively for their departure without any alternatives or offer of another job.

People who choose Path 2 will quit because of an event (shock) which prompted image violations (that is as a result of the event, a dissonance is created between people's job with one or all of the images: strategic, value and trajectory). For those who have chosen Path 3, the prompts for quitting are similar to those in Path 2. In addition, they will begin to look for alternatives and will leave even when there is no definite offer because of dissatisfaction. Those who have chosen to leave using either Path 4a or Path 4b experience gradual image violations and this can result in them quitting because of dissatisfaction either without any alternatives (Path 4a) or with alternatives and a definite job offer (Path 4b).

Applying this model in the context of workplace bullying, people are likely to leave because of the pull (bullying) and the push (perceived job availability) factors. This could be a form of coping strategy to avoid further bullying when quitting seems to be a viable option. (Hogh and Dofradottir, 2001). Researchers have found that employees who are being bullied, for instance by an abusive supervisor (Tepper, 2000), or have been verbally abused (Cox, 1987), show a greater intention to leave as compared with those who have not been bullied (Hoel and Cooper, 2000a; Keashly and Jagatic, 2000; Quine, 1999, 2001; Hogh et al, 2011). Although research in this area focuses primarily on the 'intention to leave' (Vartia, 1993; Keashly and Jagatic, 2000) and not on 'actual departure', it is, however, not difficult to see that bullying can impact on employee turnover.

Workplace bullying is not good for organizations as those who are bullied will find ways to avert the experience. The increased absenteeism from work, loss of productivity and eventual turnover can be very costly.



Organizations will not only have to pay for medical expenses for those who report sick, they will also need to employ or pay others to stand in for those who are absent. When individuals have resorted to quitting their job because of workplace bullying, organizations will then have to re-employ and retrain new employees. All of these, inadvertently will affect any short-term or long-term goals any organisations have, which will subsequently affect their overall organizational performance. All these issues can only send a very clear signal to organizations that there is a need to reconsider present policies or implement policies to keep workplace bullying at bay, if they do not want to suffer talent draining which can impact on their overall organizational performance.

#### **2.4.4 Estimated Costs of Workplace Bullying to Organizations**

Is it possible to put a value on the impact of workplace bullying on individuals and how that in turn can impact on organisations? Researchers in various countries have estimated that workplace bullying can cost organizations dearly. Leymann (1990) reported that a victimised individual will cost an organization approximately \$30,000 to \$100,000 annually; Kivimäki et al (2000), in their study about bullying in two Finnish hospitals, estimated the cost of bullied individuals being absent from work as £125,000. In an organisation of 1000 people, the cost of replacing those who leave having been victims of bullying and witnesses to such bullying was estimated as £1 million (Rayner, 2000). Hoel, Sparks & Cooper (2001), in their report on *'The Cost of Violence/Stress At Work And The Benefits Of A Violence/Stress-Free Working Environment'*, proposed two ways to estimate how violence and stress will cost organizations:

***Inductive approach*** – to add up estimates of outcome measures that are affected by categories of violence. This approach is dependent on reliable statistical data and an estimation of behaviours

connected with the exposure to violence, behaviours which, the researchers suggest, include: the average days of absence that are connected to illness; the number of people leaving work; and the frequency of complaints. This approach can be considered cumbersome and to say the least unreliable, as is noted by Castillo (1995) and Leather, Brady, Lawrence, Beale & Cox, (1999). This is because to draw a connection between the behaviours and the exposure can prove to be difficult. To be able to monitor who has reported sick, left their work and complained, requires resources and close monitoring. With the recent growth of interest in HR analytics and the use of big data, organizations might be able to extract the required information, provided they are willing to invest time and money to do so. However, even if organizations are committed to doing so, sifting through multitude of data is an arduous task.

***Deductive approach*** – to deduce the costs of violence/stress using reliable estimates of overall costs of illness at work based on self-reports from individuals, national statistical data or both. To calculate an estimation of the costs to an organization of workplace bullying based on: the costs of absenteeism; replacement costs; and loss of productivity, Hoel, Sparks, & Cooper (2001) used the results of a nation-wide survey conducted in 2000 (Hoel & Cooper, 2000a). In the 2000 survey, 5,288 individuals from 70 different organizations were studied. The researchers surveyed those who were labelled as currently bullied and the results showed 10.6% of respondents were bullied within six months, with 24.7% of them being bullied within the last five years. The results also revealed that those who were ‘currently bullied’ took on average 7 more days off work in a year compared with those who were not bullied or who had witnessed bullying taking place. Using these figures, Hoel et al (2001, p47) estimated that approximately 18 million working days (based on a workforce of 24 million) were lost annually because of workplace bullying.

They went on to calculate an estimated total cost of bullying to be close to £2 billion this includes cost for sickness absenteeism and replacement costs but not cost due to loss in productivity, see Table 2 (Hoel et al, 2001, p 49).

Scale	Currently bullied	Previously Bullied	Witness Bullying	Neither W nor B	P
Sickness absenteeism	2.18	2.03	1.85	1.78	<0.001
Intention to leave	3.23	2.59	2.39	2.21	<0.001
Work performance	2.61	2.87	3.01	3.19	<0.001
Organisational satisfaction	14.40	18.13	18.20	20.15	<.001
Organisational commitment	16.62	18.76	19.12	19.63	<0.001

Table 2 : Taken from page 26, Hoel, H. & Cooper, C.L. (2000a) Destructive Conflict and Bullying at Work. November 2000, Unpublished Report, UMIST,UK.

Hoel et al's estimation could be considered to be on the low side because figures taken from a survey conducted by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI, 2006) calculated based on the salary costs of absent individuals, replacement costs and lost service or production time. The cost estimated per employee was £531, accumulative cost of £13.2 billion to employers across the UK economy. When indirect costs such as lower customer satisfaction, poorer customer service and efforts to prevent absence were included, costs to employers were estimated to be as much as £27.7 billion. It was reported that across the UK economy in 2005, 161 million working days were lost due to employees being absent from work. However, it is reported that when senior management takes responsibility and manages absence, absence levels are lower as compared with line managers who have responsibility to manage absence (6.2 days per employee to 6.9 days per employee). This seems to indicate that to reduce absenteeism, management must be committed to put the right policies in place. In doing so they will reduce turnover. Putting all this within the

context of workplace bullying, policies to prevent and stop bullying will help to reduce absenteeism from work as a result of avoiding bullying or of being sick due to bullying.

Although calculating the actual costs to organizations of workplace bullying is not simple, the estimation that has been made of such costs should be enough to make organizations concerned. As shown in various reports and surveys, employees who report sick contribute to a huge amount of lost working days and organizations need to pay a large sum of money as a result of the impact of this phenomenon.

## **2.5 Overall Summary**

At the personal level, for those who are bullied at work, constant bullying imposes stress which can result in illness. Hence, it is imperative that organizations are committed to take actions or enact policies to identify the root causes that perpetuate workplace bullying. Organizations need to understand that they should not take relevant actions only when they are tasked to do so, for example, to respond to what stakeholders want, to counter media outcry, to protect themselves from litigation or to improve a damaged reputation. They need to be proactive in the prevention of workplace bullying by enacting anti-bullying policies and enforcing them even in the absence of legislation (Pappas and Szydlowski, 2008).

Although it may seem easiest to look discretely at the various cost factors that affect both individuals and organizations, the reality is that these factors are interwoven. For example, when individuals are exposed to bullying behaviours, they are likely to feel mentally exhausted and stressed (*psychological impact*), which can result in them seeking ways to alleviate the exhaustion

and stress by engaging in ‘poor lifestyle habits’ (*physical impact*). Should they muster enough courage to take action against the bullies, in addition to worrying about claiming compensation and the impact of litigation on their professional life, they replay the psychological and physical impacts again in a vicious cycle that is very difficult for them to break out from. The effects of taking action against bullies can result in individuals suffering as badly as or even worse than they were first bullied. So, what can individuals do if they want to deal with the psychological, physical and professional impacts of workplace bullying? What other alternatives do they have? While some strategies such as quitting or fighting against bullying through seeking help from others or redress from the organisation can provide individuals a way out, they are unfortunately, temporary in effect. The impact caused to individuals by bullying does not dissipate like the actions of their bullies. Individuals need to be able to work on the psychological and emotional scars that they have sustained from bullying. This is what this research seeks to explore by the introduction of a coping intervention – Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (A detailed discussion will be found in Chapter 4). The core purpose of this intervention is to help individuals develop *psychological flexibility* – the ability to accept negative emotions, thoughts and feelings as they are and to prevent them dominating their lives.

Where workplace bullying affects organizations, the factors are also interrelated. When individuals report sick and are absent from work due to bullying, this causes disruption to the working processes within organizations. If the sickness absence is short, organizations can get other employees to cover. However, research has shown that victims of bullying are prone to suffer sleep disturbance, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder and psychosomatic symptoms (Niedhammer, David & Degioanni, 2006; Brodsky, 1976; Einarsen and Raknes, 1997).

They are unlikely to return to work promptly and even when they do they may not be as productive and committed to work as before (Einarsen and Raknes, 1997; Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2002a). All these factors contribute to a loss of productivity for organizations. In addition, organizations have to resort to counter measures such as employing temporary help or making existing employees take on an extra workload. When victimised employees resort to leaving, organizations will have to spend time and money to resolve turnover. Replacement costs that include launching recruitment campaigns and training add to the mounting costs that organizations face due to bullying. All of these measures, while effective, are only temporary measures that address superficial issues but fail to identify the root issue - bullying in the workplace. For organizations to have a grip on all the impacts and costs of workplace bullying, it is therefore imperative for them to redesign and improve their present mechanisms, structures and policies to address workplace bullying. It is, after all, an organization's responsibility to ensure that its employees have a safe place to work (Aquino and Bommer, 2003) and a conducive working environment (Mayhew, McCarthy, Chappell, Quinlan, Barker & Sheehan, 2004) for their employees which will increase commitment and motivation, and reduce sickness absenteeism by tackling the issue of workplace bullying.

## **CHAPTER 3 : The Focus Of This Research**

### **3. The Focus Of This Research**

#### **3.1. What Is The Focus Of This Research**

When individuals are exposed to bullying in the workplace, they will choose very often not to report it because they perceive that nothing will change. They do not want to be seen as a whistle-blower. They are unsure how the organization they work for will implement its anti-bullying policies (if any) and they fear reporting a bully who has an elevated status in the organization (Carter, Thompson, Crampton, Morrow, Buford, Gray & Illing, 2013). This results in individuals losing trust in the organization they work for. Thus, individuals are then left to find ways themselves to tackle workplace bullying. As discussed in Chapter 2, the consequences to, and the impacts on, individuals who suffer from workplace bullying are manifold. Individuals can be affected psychologically (Devonish, 2014 ; Hansen, Gullander, Hogh, Persson, Kolstad, Wilert, Bonde, Kaerlev, Rugulies, & Grynderup, 2016, and Hogh, Hansen, Mikkelsen & Persson, 2012) physically (Dahl & Wilson, 2004; Freels, Richman & Rospenda, 2005; Rospenda, Fujishiro, Shannon & Richman, 2008; Townend, 2008; and Folkman, Chesney, Pollack & Phillips, 1992) and professionally (Hu, 1944). These consequences and impacts can take a toll on the psychological wellbeing of bullied individuals. While individuals can use various forms of coping strategies or interventions such as (confronting the bully; filing a report against the bully; avoiding the bully; being absent from work; or choosing to leave the organization), no research has been done on the ways bullied individuals deal with residual psychological negative thoughts and emotions. Thus, there is a need to identify a form of intervention that individuals can use to help themselves and avoid getting stuck in a vicious cycle of rumination and self-blame.

The purpose of this research, therefore, is to help individuals who have been exposed to bullying to be in control, and to provide them a method by which they can help themselves to deal with bullying. There is a need for a method that goes beyond the use of active or passive strategies, which will be adopted anyway, and for one that provides skill sets that can empower bullied victims to learn how to look beyond their experiences and to focus on what matters to them – their values. One which, in fact, that teaches individuals to accept the recurring negative thoughts and emotions which are the manifestations of their bullying experiences, and to apply actions to enable them to move towards their values.

This thesis postulates that bullying leads to psychological inflexibility (that is the emotions, ruminations and negative thoughts that arise from bullying). It examines the use of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) as an intervention tool to improve psychological flexibility in bullied individuals (ACT is discussed in detail in Chapter 4). This chapter will focus on the success of the use of ACT as an intervention tool and the reasons why ACT can be used as an intervention tool for victims of workplace bullying.

### **3.2 Psychological Flexibility and Bullying**

What is the relevance of the concept of psychological flexibility to bullying? Individuals who are psychologically flexible are less emotionally disturbed than those who are psychologically inflexible (Baer, 2003; Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda & Lillis, 2006), as typically are individuals who are bullied. Instead of being too caught up with their emotions, psychologically flexible individuals will focus their attention and time on how they can utilise opportunities in the present moment to achieve their goals. To become psychologically flexible, individuals need to learn to



accept what they feel, experience or think (Acceptance); to defuse from these feelings and thoughts (Cognitive Defusion); to respond flexibly and be open to new possibilities by being in contact with the present moment (Being Present); to learn to be an observer of a situation (Self-As-Context); to delineate values that are important to them (Values); and to identify the relevant actions that are relevant to those values (Committed Actions). These skills are the components of what is called the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). In chapter 4 of this research, the various components of ACT will be discussed, and a comparison between Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy will be made. In the following paragraphs, the discussion will turn to the success and benefits of ACT and why it is being examined in this thesis research.

### **3.3. Application Of ACT**

#### **3.3.1 ACT Research**

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy emphasizes the role of context in understanding psychological experiences such as thoughts, feelings, memories and physiological sensations (Woidneck, Pratt, Gundy, Nelson & Twohig, 2012). This therapy is rooted deeply in the philosophical foundation of behavioural analysis known as *functional contextualism*, (Hayes, 1993). It is also rooted in *relational frame theory* (RFT; Hayes, Barnes-Holmes, & Roche, 2001; Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 1999), which delineates how language influences cognition, emotion, and behaviour. ACT has been found to help individuals deal with depression, PTSD, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, absenteeism, psychosis, relational aggression and anxiety. In the following paragraphs, research on ACT will be discussed primarily in terms of how it has been

successful in dealing with some of those symptoms listed above.

### **3.3.2 Psychological Disorders**

In the workplace, those affected by bullying (victims and bystanders) can suffer from stress, anxiety, depression, psychosis, sleeplessness and negative health conditions (Balducci, Alfano, & Fraccaroli, 2009; Hogh, Mikkelsen, & Hansen, 2011; Nielsen, Hetland, Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2012; Hallberg and Strandmark 2006; Kivimäki, Virtanen, Vartia, Elovainio, Vahtera, & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2003; Mikkelsen and Einarsen 2002; Hogh, Henriksson & Burr, 2005; Hansen, Høgh, Persson, Karlson, Garde, & Ørbæk, 2006). These symptoms are manifested because individuals allow themselves to be fused with their negative thoughts, feelings and beliefs (Eifert & Forsyth, 2005; Forsyth, Eifert, & Barrios, 2006). What then should individuals do? According to ACT, to reduce fusion, individuals need to learn how to cognitively defuse or flexibly distance themselves from the literal meaning of those cognitions. By doing so, the cognitions are no longer able to dictate behaviour. Dalrymple & Herbert (2007), in their research on the application of ACT to social phobia, found that cognitive defusion, acceptance and valued action were predictors for subsequent symptom improvement. Applying ACT to individuals who are obsessive compulsive shows an increase in cognitive defusing, acceptance and valued guided actions (Twohig, Hayes, Plumb, Pruitt, Collins, Hazlett-Stevens, & Woidneck, 2010; Twohig, Hayes, & Masuda, (2006). Orsillo & Batten (2005) also reported that ACT was efficient in dealing with posttraumatic disorder. The application of ACT to psychotic inpatients (Gaudiano & Herbert, 2006a, 2006b; Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda, & Lillis, 2006) and depressed outpatients (Zettle & Hayes, 1986) has been reported to be successful in helping them to cognitively defuse distressing

hallucinations and cognitions.

Being bullied at work can lead individuals to feel depressed, as they will be struggling to perform their job at the same time as they are dealing with the bullying. These individuals may begin to blame themselves for the state that they are in (Mezulis, Abramson, Hyde & Hankin, 2004) and may resort to using avoidance as a form of strategy to alleviate themselves from feeling depressed. However, any success gained by this type of strategy is short-lived as the fused thoughts are still not eliminated. It is, therefore, important that individuals are able to find the right intervention they can exercise to relieve themselves from the depressive state. In this instance ACT is that kind of intervention. It encourages individuals to apply the skills they have learned within the ACT model to help themselves. In other words, ACT is a form of guided self-help intervention. This type of approach has been shown to yield positive outcomes. For example, Fledderus, Bohlmeijer, Pieterse & Schreurs (2011) wanted to investigate whether early intervention for people who were at risk could help to reduce depressive symptomatology. The research recruited participants with mild to moderate depressive symptomatology and they were randomized into 3 groups: 1) a group that had received an ACT self-help programme with extensive email support (ACT-E); 2) a group that had received an ACT self-help programme with minimal email support (ACT-M); 3) a waiting list control group (W-L). Participants completed measures pre- and post-intervention to assess depression, anxiety, fatigue, experiential avoidance, positive mental health and mindfulness. The researchers reported that those who received the guided ACT self-help intervention in both groups had significantly more reduction in depressive symptoms directly after the intervention as compared to the waiting list group (W-L). This reduction was sustained even at a 3 month follow up.

In another study, when a guided internet-delivered ACT programme was used as an intervention for chronic pain patients, it was shown to have positive outcomes (Burhman, Skoglund, Husswell, Bergstrom, Gordh, Hursti, Bendelin, Furmark, & Andersson, 2013). In this research, 76 patients with chronic pain participated and were randomly assigned to 2 groups: 1) those who received treatment for 7 weeks; or 2) a control group that participated in a moderated online discussion forum. The researchers found that there was an increase in patient involvement in activities and their willingness to accept the pain they experienced. Reductions of pain-related distress, anxiety and depressive symptoms were also recorded. The researchers concluded that this form acceptance based internet delivered treatment is effective for people suffering from chronic pain.

ACT has been shown to be useful in helping individuals suffering from psychosis. Bach & Hayes (2002) found that those patients who were given 4 sessions of ACT intervention over a 4-month period reported a reduction of rehospitalization by 50%. Participants in the ACT intervention were also more likely to report symptoms and showed lower believability of the psychotic symptoms as compared with participants who received treatment as usual (TAU - medication, psychoeducational groups and individual psychotherapy).

### **3.3.3 Eating Disorders**

One of the strategies used by victims of bullying, who are stressed, is the use of food as a form of comfort. They are likely to binge on food (Townend, 2008) or suffer from some form of eating disorder. People who suffer from eating disorders are extremely focused on their body and

food intake so as to avoid feelings of rejection, imperfection, failure, inadequacy and vulnerability (Hayes & Pankey, 2002; Keyser, Pastelak, Sharma, Choi, Bender, & Alloy, 2009; Paxton & Diggins, 1997; Pells, 2006). It has been reported that eating disorders in adult patients, such as Bulimia Nervosa (BN) and Anorexia Nervosa (AN) are difficult to treat because of their unwillingness to be treated (Fairburn, 2008). One way to help these individuals manage their disorders is through residential or inpatient care, which can yield improvement. However, such intervention has been found to suffer high rates of relapse (Wiseman, Sunday, Klapper, Harris & Halmi, 2000).

On the other hand, the use of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) has been found to achieve significant reductions in eating pathology only for those who suffered from bulimia nervosa (Fairburn, 2008; Wilson, 2005) but not for those who suffer from anorexia nervosa (McIntosh, Jordan, Carter, Luty, McKenzie, Bulik, Frampton & Joyce et al, 2005; Wilson, 2007). Thus, there is a need to look for another intervention that can help sufferers of both types of eating disorder. Juarascio, Shaw, Forman, Timko, Herbert, Butryn, Bunnell, Matteucci & Lowe (2013) sought to investigate the efficacy of a group-based ACT treatment for a population of adult residential patients with eating disorders.

The goal of this research was to see whether ACT intervention (twice weekly ACT group treatment that comprised exercises and discussions) coupled with treatment as usual (TAU – regular weighting, normalization of eating, treatment, meetings and group sessions) could produce larger reductions in disordered eating than TAU alone. Despite being a pilot study, the researchers were able to report that there was a slight improvement with regards to eating pathology, increased

psychological flexibility and reduced rehospitalization. While the results were unable to pinpoint conclusively the efficacy of the ACT intervention, what was clear from the study was that ACT as a treatment in this type of eating pathology can be useful.

### **3.4 ACT In Workplace Bullying**

#### **3.4.1 ACT as an intervention in Workplace Bullying**

So why would ACT be relevant in the case of workplace bullying? There are indeed a few reasons why ACT can be effective for individuals to help themselves when they are being exposed to bullying in the workplace.

#### **3.4.2 Reasons**

To begin with, there is no other type of intervention which empowers individuals to help themselves when they are psychologically inflexible plagued with negative thoughts and emotions. As discussed, ACT intervention is about psychological flexibility and individuals are taught the relevant skills to help them navigate their negative thoughts, emotions and sensation by ways of cognitive defusion, acceptance, mindfulness and values-based actions (detailed processes will be discussed in Chapter 4).

Secondly, research on the application on ACT has shown that when individuals learn how to psychologically distance themselves from negative thoughts, emotions and sensations, they are able to work towards what matters to them – their values (Bohlmejer, Fledderus, Rokx & Pieterse,

2011). In addition, Rizert, Forsyth, Sheppard, Boswell, Berghoff & Eifert (2016) have reported the effectiveness of a self-help ACT workbook for participants who suffered from anxiety disorders.

Similarly, internet-delivered ACT treatment for people with depressive symptoms has also yielded promising results (Lappalainen, Langrial, Oinas-Kukkonen, Tolvanen, & Lappalainen, 2015). ACT is a low-cost intervention allowing bullied victims to help themselves. Rather than attending sessions with therapists, which can be costly especially if bullied victims are no longer in employment, individuals can administer ACT themselves at low cost (Gordon & Risley, 1999).

Thirdly, when some individuals are being bullied, they tend to resort to substance or alcohol abuse, engage in behaviours such as binge eating, excessive exercising and unsafe sexual practices as a way to forget their negative experience. In doing so, these individuals are essentially replacing their negative experience (bullying) with a temporary relief (alcohol, drugs, binge eating, excessive exercises and unsafe sexual practices) which can obviously be deleterious if individuals become dependent on them. Dependency will create a vicious cycle that will only make individuals feel more trapped. The use of ACT to help individuals who suffer from alcohol use disorder (AUD) and depression or bipolar disorder has been reported to be successful. In their study to examine whether ACT could enhance treatment as usual (TAU) for patients with alcohol use disorder (AUD) and comorbid affective disorder, Thekiso, Murphy, Milnes, Lambe, Curtin & Farren (2015) found that those who have gone through ACT reported higher abstinence and lower depression as compared with individuals who received treatment as usual (TAU - inpatient integrated treatment).

Lastly, to date no other research has dealt specifically with ways with which individuals can help themselves when they suffer workplace bullying. This thesis therefore is important. This is because this thesis research will not only add to the extensive literature on workplace bullying, but by the investigation of the application of ACT to victims of bullying, the hope is to sow the seeds for future research to focus on a self-driven intervention methodology to help individuals deal with their victimization.

### **3.5 Overall Summary**

Workplace bullying is still a topic that is not discussed openly, despite the large amount of research which make plain how workplace bullying can affect organizations in ways such as increased absenteeism, (Kivimäki, Elovainio, & Vathera, 2000; Hoel and Cooper, 2000a) loss of productivity (Mitchell and Bates, 2011) and high turnover costs (Cascio, 2006; and Shaw, 2005). Little has been done to help victims of workplace bullying. This research is about just that – identifying a tool that victims can utilise to help themselves to move on from a bullying experience and work towards the values that matter to them.



## **CHAPTER 4 : The Intervention And Methodology**

### **4. The Intervention And Methodology**

Workplace bullying is a phenomenon that can affect individuals in many ways. Those bullied can experience adjustment disorders, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, psychotic disorders (Nolfe, Patrella, Blasi & Zontini, 2007; Tehrani, 2004; Matthiesen and Einarsen, 2004) and musculoskeletal complaints (Vie, Glason & Einarsen, 2012). Arguably, a decrease in such occurrences can be achieved when organizations take steps to curb workplace bullying and deal with perpetrators appropriately, by creating awareness of workplace bullying through communication, and the enacting and enforcing of anti-bullying policies. In doing so, organizations are able to create a conducive working environment for their employees which will increase employees' work satisfaction, productivity and reduce turnover. However, there is a need for organizations to do more to help individuals who have been victims of workplace bullying, to support them on the road to recovery, that is to help them cope with the psychological issues that arise from their bullying experiences. Being bullied in the workplace can impact greatly on the psychological well-being of individuals. The following paragraph will highlight the various psychopathologies which victims of workplace bullying can experience.

#### **4.1 Psychopathologies in Workplace Bullying**

It has been found that victims of bullying suffer some health conditions like anxiety and depression (Hogh, Mikkelsen, & Hansen, 2011). Sleep difficulties have also been found in people who are bullied and also those who witness bullying. (Hansen, Hogh, Garde & Persson, 2014, in

a 2 year follow up study). Mikkelsen and colleagues (2001), in their research with four Danish organizational settings, found that employees who were subjected to bullying and bullying behaviours reported significantly more psychological health complaints and psychosomatic complaints than those who were not exposed to the bullying behaviours. Their results, apart from being in alignment with previous studies (Niedl, 1996; Zapf, Knorz & Kulla, 1996), also found that employees who reported exposure to bullying acts also exhibited symptoms of depression. Other researchers have also found that even victims with only a few days' exposure to bullying report psychosomatic and physiological complaints, as well as reporting psychological problems such as anxiety, negative effects and depressive symptoms. (Bowling & Beehr, 2006, Hansen, Hogh, Persson, Karlson, Garde, Ørbæk, 2006, Martino, Hoel & Cooper, 2003). Finne et al (2011) in their study of Norwegian employees were able to support the proposition that self-reported workplace bullying did predict mental distress two years later. They also found in their study that mental distress predicted bullying. Kivimäki et al (2003) showed not only that undergoing bullying predicted the incidence of depression, but also that the presence of a diagnosis of depression predicted the incidence of bullying, suggesting that personal psychological factors may be implicated in bullying. Balducci et al (2011), in their study of 609 participants from a public administration agency, found that bullying mediated between the demands of a job and PTSD symptoms. The researchers claimed that their study was the first to explore the relationship between bullying and PTSD symptoms in a non-clinical sample and that no other research had focused on bullying as a mediating role in a model (job demands resource model – JDR model) that linked work conditions to bullying and also linked from bullying to PTSD symptoms. Tehrani (2004), in her study of 165 care professionals, found that within a 2-year period, 40% of them had been bullied and 68% of them had observed bullying taking place. She further reported that of the

67 care professionals that were bullied, 44% of them experienced high levels of PTSD. Other researchers such as Rodríguez-Muñoz, Moreno, Sanz Vergei, and Hernandez (2010), have also found that 42.6% of long-term (that is, at least six months) bullying victims had symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder. It has been reported that one of the effects of extreme bullying is attempted suicide. (Leymann & Neidl, 1994; Popma, 2005). So, what can be done to help these individuals? To answer this question, the following paragraphs will discuss the development of behavioural therapies and will focus on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), which has been found to help individuals deal with psychological disorders (Masuda et al, 2007; Arch and Craske, 2008; Fledderus et al, 2011; and Powers et al, 2009).

Before explaining what Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT) is, it is necessary to understand the development of behavioural therapies. The discussion will compare Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT), since both therapies are used to help individuals cope with psychological disorders.

#### **4.2 What is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy?**

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a ‘third wave’ behavioural therapy that has garnered interests in the past three decades (Hayes et al, 2012). This form of therapy, however, is not something new. Instead, ACT stems from what Skinner (1974) called radical behaviourism or the conceptual analysis of behaviour. To understand how this therapy came about and why it is considered to be a useful therapy to be used to help people to deal with their maladaptive thoughts, emotions and behaviour, it is important to look back how at behavioural therapy was first introduced.

### 4.2.1 Behavioural Therapy

Behavioural therapy is an approach that helps in the development of well-specified and rigorously tested technologies that were built on well-established principles as commented by Franks & Wilson (1974). Those who practiced behavioural therapy were critical of theories that were not well researched and that were loosely structured like the psychoanalytic approach. (pp 11-13, Bandura, 1969; Wolpe & Rachman, 1960). In comparison with the psychoanalytic approach, behaviourists believe that their form of therapy is rational, direct and empirically supported. The advent of such a therapeutic movement has resulted in the rejection of the psychoanalytic approach being used in dealing with clinical issues. Despite the protests of the psychoanalytic camp, who deemed the behavioural approach as whimsical and superficial (Bookbinder, 1962; Schraml & Selg, 1966), their concerns were criticised (Yates, 1958) and shown to be empirically unfounded (Nurnberger & Hingtgen, 1973).

The need to have a therapy that is rigorous and processed driven has spurred behaviourists to establish behavioural therapy as an alternative to the psychoanalytic approach. Since it was first introduced, behavioural therapy has evolved into a therapy that has incorporated different techniques and methods to help individuals. To understand the gradual development of such a therapy, it is good to have an understanding of how it all started and where it is at present. The progression of this therapy is aptly labelled as the first, second and third wave of behavioural therapy. So what exactly constitutes the first wave of behavioural therapy?

#### 4.2.2 First Wave of Behavioural Therapy

The first wave of behavioural therapy can be traced back to the early 1950s when separately in three different countries a form of behavioural therapy was developed. One of these was Joseph Wolpe (1958), who developed reciprocal inhibition and systematic desensitization for phobias and anxiety disorders. Ogden and colleagues (1953) used operant conditioning to help those who had chronic schizophrenia. Eysenck (1952) believed that psychotherapy might not necessarily be the answer to facilitate recovery from neurotic disorder, and that therapeutic practices should be empirical, which is why he was determined to base his form of behavioural therapy on conditioning processes.

*I came up with my first rudimentary idea of behaviour therapy – i.e., a method of treatment for neurotic disorders which would regard them as conditioned emotional responses to be extinguished through well-known processes described in all the textbooks of learning and conditioning. (Eysenck, 1997, p.1136)*

Although developed separately, this type of behaviour therapy has its roots in theories of *classical conditioning* (Pavlov, 1927 - learning new associations between experiences) and *operant conditioning* (Skinner, 1938 - between experiences and behaviour). These researchers believed that these conditionings are prevalent in people who suffered from psychological problems as they had learned counterproductive behaviours. It was also during this time that Beck (1963) and Ellis (1962) both began to explore and develop cognitive and rational therapy respectively. Both researchers recognised that people experienced psychological distress because they embedded biases such as rigid thinking, ruminating and catastrophizing, into their present styles of thought processing. Both Beck and Ellis introduced various methods into their therapies

such as collaborative relationship between therapist and patient and the use of open questioning to identify biased beliefs so as to encourage the patients to test those beliefs against what is realistic in the real world. The amalgamation of both the behavioural and cognitive approaches was a result of an attempt to compensate for the limitations of learning theory by using the benefits of cognitive science. (Rachman, 1997). This resulted in the development of the second wave of behavioural therapy.

#### **4.2.3 Second Wave of Behavioural Therapy – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy**

Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) was developed by Aaron Beck in the 1960s as a form of psychotherapy. Beck (1964) created a present-oriented form of psychotherapy, which was short term and structured, to address depression with a focus on solving present issues and changing unhelpful or inaccurate thinking and behaviour. CBT works on the premise of a working relationship between the therapist and the client, focuses primarily on current issues that need addressing and uses an evidence-based approach to test beliefs and assumptions.

Since its inception, this form of therapy has been adapted to treat a diverse population with a plethora of disorders and issues. For example, about 500 outcome studies have demonstrated the efficacy of cognitive behaviour therapy in treating a wide range of psychiatric disorders, psychological problems and medical problems with psychological components (Butler, Chapman, Forman & Beck, 2005; Chambless & Ollendick, 2001). The problems treated include anxiety and phobias (Beck et al, 1985), substance abuse (Beck et al, 1993), personality disorder (Sperry, 1999), obsessive-compulsive disorder (Salkovskis, 1999), post-traumatic stress disorder (Ehlers and Clark, 2000), psychosis (Morrison, 2001) and bipolar disorder (Newman, et al., 2002). CBT

has been used to treat psychiatric inpatients (Wright et al, 1993), patients with chronic medical problems (White, 2001), children and adolescents (Friedberg and McClure, 2002) and older people (Laidlaw et al, 2003).

The efficacy of CBT has been shown by the way it has helped individuals in different ways. For example, researchers have found cognitive behavioural therapies to be effective in community settings (Shadish, Matt, Navarro & Philips, 2000; Simons et al, 2010; Stirman, Buchhofer, McLaulin, Evans & Beck, 2009). Khanna & Kendall (2010) and Wright et al (2002) both found that computer-assisted CBT could also be effective. Goldapple et al (2004) found that CBT seemed to be able to affect clinical recovery from depression by the modulation of the limbic and cortical regions of the brain.

To understand why CBT has become an effective form of therapy, it is necessary to look at its theoretical background.

#### **4.2.4 Theoretical perspective of CBT**

In CBT, peoples' psychological disturbances, moods and behaviours are generally influenced by their distorted thoughts (Weisharr, 1996). However, when given the opportunity to evaluate their own thoughts realistically, people are likely to be able to make adjustments to their behaviour which will improve their emotional state. To help these individuals to attain lasting improvement in their behaviour, a therapist will dwell deeply into their basic beliefs about how they perceive themselves, the world, and other people. Behavioural change will become permanent when people are able to alter their dysfunctional beliefs.

The aim of CBT is to help clients deal with distress by changing their cognitive and behavioural responses to anxiety (Craske, 1999; Craske & Barlow, 1993). According to learning theory (Foa & Kozak, 1986), CBT helps clients to develop a new associative network of adaptive thoughts and behaviours to compete with or modify maladaptive, fear-based networks and memories. However, while all the basic principles of CBT are applied in therapeutic sessions, it must be stressed that each therapy is unique and different, tailor-made, in fact, to address individuals' specific concerns. This is because CBT is a symptom-focussed therapy. The success of a good CBT intervention can be dependent on the design of the intervention and the willingness of an individual to accept the changes recommended. When a therapist designs a CBT intervention, some factors will be considered; for example, the severity of the issues faced by the individual, the motivation of the individual to change and the individual's past experience with therapeutic interventions.

#### **4.2.4.1 CBT in Practice**

In a typical CBT session, the therapist will seek to identify the dysfunctional cognitions an individual has and also his response to those cognitions. To elicit such thoughts, the individuals will be asked, 'What is going through your mind right now?' This will be followed by an evaluation of the reported thinking. This is done by 1) taking the individuals on a guided discovery to enable them to develop a realistic and adaptable perspective (also known as *cognitive restructuring*); and 2) using behavioural experiments to test the individuals' predictions (Beck, 2011).



To help an individual to realise that distorted thoughts are merely ideas and not necessarily truths, a CBT therapist will ask an individual a series of questions, for example:

‘What is the evidence that your thought is true?’

‘What is the worst that could happen, and how could you cope if it did?’

“What is the effect of believing your automatic thought, and what could be the effect of changing your thinking?” (Beck, 2011)

Challenging the individuals to confront their anxious thoughts is meant to help them to take note of good or bad effects of those thoughts. In doing so, they will be able to identify the cognitive errors that arise from those thoughts. According to Bennett-Levy et al (2004), individuals are likely to experience a profound change in their thoughts when they are given an opportunity to test them. This can be done by asking individuals to participate in behavioural experiments. For example, individuals tasked to challenge anxiety-related predictions, will be faced by the very stimuli that trigger their anxiety and to witness whether the predicted disasters will actually take place. By exposing individuals to feared stimuli, the CBT therapist is enabled to challenge automatic thoughts and to teach the necessary skills to prevent relapse.

#### 4.2.4.2 The Cognitive Model

According to the cognitive model, peoples' emotions, behaviours and physiology are caused by how they construe an event. (Beck, 1964; Ellis, 1962). That is to say, different people will have different reactions and feelings and will behave differently in similar situations. How then does one know what exactly these feelings and thoughts are? To find out, it is necessary to look at the *automatic thoughts* that manifest when people are presented with a situation or event.

#### 4.2.4.3 Automatic Thoughts

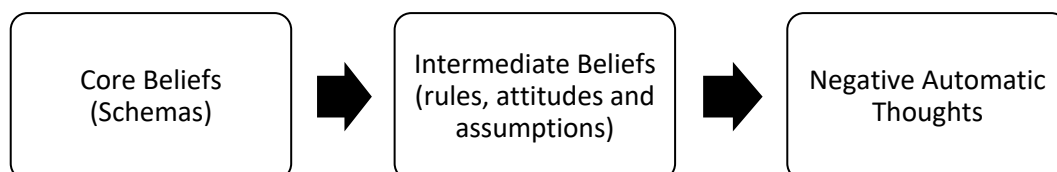
When a person is presented with a situation, the mind will try to assimilate all the information available to make sense of it. This is done so with deliberation, or in other words reasoning which Fernyhough (1996) categorised as '*dialogic thinking*', - that is thinking done as an internalised, mediated activity. On a different level, the mind is also capable of coming up with thoughts that are spontaneous (*automatic thoughts*). When this happens, the next thing that follows will be a reaction to that thought. For example, when a person thinks that he or she has achieved something great, he or she will be happy (*an emotion*) and may begin to dance (*a behaviour*). It is all well and good when an *automatic thought* elicits positive emotions and behaviour. The problem arises when such *automatic thoughts* become negative. When a person has negative automatic thoughts (NATS), he or she will start to feel sad (emotion) and may begin to avoid talking to anyone. (behaviour).

#### 4.2.4.4 Beliefs

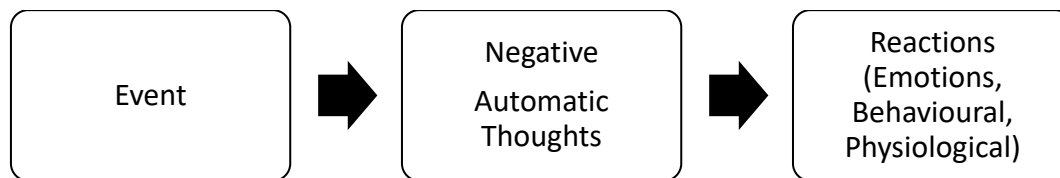
According to the model, how a person generates *automatic thoughts* is connected with the fundamental beliefs he holds. All fundamental beliefs are moulded throughout our childhood to our adulthood through the things we learn, what we are taught and from the things and people that we observe. As time passes, all these beliefs become part of who we are, what we stand for and how we behave. This is more pronounced when a person is psychologically distressed, because his thoughts will be ‘more rigid and distorted, the judgements made will become overgeneralised and absolute which will in turn make the person’s beliefs of himself or herself and of the world become very fixed’ (Weisharr, 1996).

As a person’s core beliefs become stronger, he will begin to create ‘an intermediate class of beliefs: attitude, rule and assumptions’ (Beck, 2011). These beliefs will help the individual to navigate his or her thought processes, emotional expression and behaviour. An example of the application of intermediate beliefs is as follows:

Attitude:	‘I panic if I do not submit my project on time’
Rule:	‘Give up if the workload proves to be unattainable’
Assumptions:	‘If I do not have time, I will not be able to complete the task’



According to Rosen (1988), people function adaptively to, and make sense of their, environment through a logical way of organising their experiences. Primed by their genetic dispositions, the beliefs they form through their interactions with the world and other people might not necessarily be functional and realistic. This is, therefore, why one of the primary aims of CBT sessions is to help individuals alter their dysfunctional beliefs. In so doing, individuals will be able to interpret future situations in a more constructive way. CBT therapist will work together with individuals to evaluate their core and intermediate beliefs and modify them. This in turn will change the way these individuals perceive situations or events. Researchers have found that when fundamental beliefs are modified, patients are less likely to relapse (Evans et al, 1992; Hollon, DeRubeis & Seligman, 1992).



As we already know, when an individual is faced with a situation, *negative automatic thoughts* surface because of the existing beliefs the individual holds. When *negative automatic thoughts* occur, an individual will respond either emotionally or physiologically, and it is this which produces a behaviour. According to Greenberger and Padesky (1995), these five aspects (*events, negative automatic thoughts, emotional, behavioural and physiological reactions*) of a person's life experience are capable of interacting with one another and the understanding of how they interact can be useful for a person to have insight into his or her own problem.

For the intervention to be successful, a CBT therapist will conduct an assessment session in which an evaluation will be done. This is to enable the therapist to understand more about an individual so as to do a diagnosis of the inherent issues that he or she faces before the actual cognitive behavioural therapy session starts. Once the therapist has gathered enough information, according to Beck (2011), the next stage is where the therapist will assess the information and suggests the next steps. These will include a relevant treatment plan and a good therapeutic relationship with the individual so as to allow the therapist to guide the individual to set achievable goals.

CBT recognises that humans are active participants in building their own reality (Clark, 1995). To understand how they respond to a certain situation or event, it is important to understand the way they construct their reality and this can be done by looking at their core beliefs. While core beliefs enable one to look at situations and produce *automatic thoughts*, not all of these thoughts are helpful and they can be too rigid. CBT, in this respect, offers individuals alternative viewpoints to look at the situations they are in (Butler and Hope, 1996). What is interesting here is that in order for a person to be able to have an unbiased reality, there is a need for him or her to somehow ‘re-learn’ what he or she has accumulated through his or her childhood to adulthood. To do that, there is also a need, therefore in a CBT session, for the therapist to help an individual to identify the faulty part within his or her thoughts and to rectify it so that the individual will feel liberated. This form of problem seeking and solving is the crux of CBT treatment. This seems to indicate that the only way for an individual to steer clear of any relapse of any form of psychopathology, is to stay vigilant in observing distorted thoughts and to modify core beliefs.

The question remains, is being able to change our negative thoughts, so that we will be able to feel and behave accurately according to the situation we are in, the panacea for all maladaptive behaviours and thoughts? There is perhaps another alternative. Some researchers have come to believe that by simply acknowledging negative thoughts, an individual would be able to channel their energies not into finding ways to suppress those thoughts but into actions that bring them closer to what matters to them – *values*. According to proponents of the third wave behavioural therapy, it is possible and they have developed a new type of therapy - *Acceptance Commitment Therapy*

#### **4.2.5 Third Wave of Behavioural Therapy**

Critics of the CBT's methodology have realised that there is a need to look at alternative theories and models to help people with maladaptive thoughts. This has resulted in the introduction of therapies such as Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT, Segal et al, 2002), Metacognitive Therapy (MCT, Wells, 2009), and Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT, Hayes et al, 1999). Although the proponents of these three therapies recognise the importance of the concept of decentring (Beck, 1976), that is the recognition of thoughts as a psychological event rather than a reality, these therapies are in fact very different.

Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy is based on the theoretical model Interacting Cognitive Subsystems (ICS) developed by Teasdale and Barnard (1993). ICS model seeks to understand how components in the mind are configured, how components are represented, and the overall interactions between configured and represented components in real time. The components (or subsystems) subsequently become interlocked and this leads to continuous cycle of rumination.

To help individuals break this cycle, MBCT incorporates a mindfulness-stress reduction method - meditation (developed by Kabat-Zinn, 1999) - and CBT methods to interrupt automatic thought processes.

Metacognitive Therapy is built upon the Self-Regulatory Executive Function model (S-REF, Wells & Matthews, 1994). This model has three interacting levels: automatic and reflexively driven processing units; attentional demanding and voluntary processing; and stored knowledge or self-beliefs. (Wells & Matthews, 1996). Wells (2009) theorises that individuals are likely to exhibit anxieties or mood symptoms because of recurrent and rigid styles of thinking. He classifies this type of thinking as Cognitive Attentional Syndrome (CAS), which is made up of: 1) worry and rumination; 2) threat monitoring; and 3) coping behaviours. MCT does not challenge negative automatic thoughts, instead it encourages individuals to learn what to do, and how to best react to negative thoughts by tackling CAS. This is done through attention training so as to enable individuals to detach from negative thoughts and refocus so that they are able to develop new ways to tackle those maladaptive thoughts. (Wells & Matthew, 1994; Wells, 2009). A study on the relationship between CAS and mood (depression) and anxiety (generalized anxiety, social anxiety, obsessive-compulsive anxiety, and panic) conducted on 132 patients found a positive association between CAS and the assessed symptoms, especially for those who were suffering from depression and generalised anxiety. (Fergus et al, 2013). The researchers concluded that the research supported Wells' theory and that interventions targeting those CAS would be useful in treating certain forms of disorders.

Although, both MBCT and MCT do not encourage individuals to challenge the content of negative thoughts, they do encourage individuals to work on how to prevent negative thoughts from getting out of control, as CBT advocates. Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT Hayes et al, 1999) works differently. This form of therapy uses mindfulness acceptance and focuses on radical behaviourism. The main difference between ACT and MBCT & MCT, is that ACT does not encourage individuals to engage their time and energies to prevent negative automatic thoughts. Instead, ACT encourages the acceptance of negative thoughts, mindfulness of the present and focuses upon values-based action.

ACT, is therefore singled out to be therapy of choice for this PhD workplace bullying research because both MBCT and MCT require an individual to confront negative thoughts in their processes, whereas this is not the case for ACT.

#### **4.2.6 Acceptance Commitment Therapy**

Acceptance Commitment Therapy (which is usually spoken of as ACT, rather than as A.C.T.) describes itself as ‘*an extensive empirical, theoretical, and philosophical research program that demonstrates how language embroils clients in a fight with themselves and their experience*’. (Hayes et al., 1999). This therapy is rooted deeply in the philosophical foundation of behavioural analysis known as *functional contextualism*, (Hayes, 1993) and also *relational frame theory* (RFT; Hayes, Barnes-Holmes, & Roche, 2001; Hayes et al., 1999), that delineates how language influences cognition, emotion, and behaviour.



#### 4.2.6.1 The Philosophical Perspective of ACT - Functional Contextualism

ACT stems from the school of behavioural analysis. The philosophical foundation of behaviour analysis is termed as '*functional contextualism*' (Hayes, 1993). According to Stephen Pepper (1942), contextualism is about pragmatism and it is the '*ongoing act in context*' which means commonsense-situated action. What contextualists seek is to maintain contact with the event in its entirety and its context. In doing so, the analysis of the event will be holistic. The focus on the function within a context is what matters rather than the form of the context. To put it bluntly, '*an act is not an act or part of an event if the act is not part of its setting*'. (p232, Pepper, 1942). For example, when a person takes a bus to work, this will be considered as a whole event. This is because the person takes the bus to fulfil a purpose – to work. Even if the bus did break down, the person will look at different options such as taking a taxi to fulfil the purpose of the journey. For contextualists, such a pragmatic view of the truth is important as it depicts '*successful working*' (Hayes et al, 1988). That is say a pragmatic truth can be deemed to be successful when the activity done is able to help an individual achieve a stated goal. Thus the analysis of goals becomes important to contextualism because it allows one to analyse whether the activity done was successful or not. It must be stated that goals guide one to delineate the steps required to achieve them. Simply put, goals are stated and not evaluated. The steps delineated by an individual to fulfil a goal will be what contextualists are interested to evaluate. For example, a shy individual feels uncomfortable when it comes to social events. He states that he would like to get rid of the nervousness. However, when this is probed further, it is found that the reason he is eager to get rid of the nervousness is because he would like to be able to make friends. Thus, in this instance, the goal is to make friends, getting rid of the nervousness is the means to achieve that. It is not possible

then to evaluate the goal as it is the end result that he wishes to achieve. However, on the other hand, the process of reaching the goal (that is getting rid of the nervousness) can be evaluated.

According to Hayes (1993) descriptive contextualism is the most dominant form of contextualism. As stated earlier, contextualists look at all the components of an event which is metaphorically known as the ‘act in context’ (p, 289, Gifford & Hayes, 1999). It must be noted here that ‘act’ in this instance relates to behaviour and ‘context’ can be defined as ‘streams of events’ that can have an impact on behaviour (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2012). Accordingly, behaviour here is activities that are observable, can be used to predict future behaviours or outcomes, and influence other behaviours. Context, on the other hand, includes history and situations. In another word, for functional contextualists, their aim is look at the ‘*prediction and influence of ongoing interactions between whole organisms and historically and situationally defined contexts*’ (p8, Hayes, Follette & Linehan, 2004).

The four characteristics (*the whole event, context, truth and goals*) delineated above that make up functional contextualism are not only philosophical constructs, they are important components that permeate the ethos and practice of ACT therapy. Now that we have understood the philosophical aspects upon which ACT is built, we will now turn our attention to the theory behind this third wave therapy.

#### 4.2.6.2 Theoretical Perspective of ACT - Relational Frame Theory

In ACT, both human language and cognition are important. Although ACT is not the first therapy to focus theoretically on language and cognition in order to understand people and their environments, ACT's approach can be considered as practical and relevant. The theory on which ACT is based is a '*comprehensive functional contextual program of basic research on language and cognition called Relational Frame Theory*' (RFT: Hayes, Barnes-Holmes, & Roche, 2001). RFT explains that humans are able to relate events to each other because of social conventions. This means that humans are likely to respond to an event based on its ascribed relation to another event, instead of just looking at the physical properties of that events. (Luoma, Hayes, Walser, 2007). In other words, humans have the capability to make sense or relate events that are not related (Liplens, Hayes & Hayes, 1993). This type of flexibility allows us to create immense relational networks and to look at events construed solely by our verbal abilities instead of direct experiences.

To be effective in attributing relations between events, one has to learn and apply what is known as 'relational frames'. Relational framing is a learned behaviour with three main properties within a defined context. They are: mutual entailment; combinatorial entailment; and transformation of the stimulus function (p 44, Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2012).

*Mutual entailments depict a relation that is learned in one direction which will also entail another in the opposite direction. For example, Sally learned in a given context that Peter was shorter than Andy, she will also understand that Andy is taller than Peter.*

*Combinatorial entailment means the combination of relations that are mutual. For example, Sally has now learned that although Peter is shorter than Andy, he is actually stronger than Andy. However, Sally was also told that James is stronger than Peter. In this instance, Sally will deduce that James will also be stronger than Andy.*

*The transformation of stimulus function transforms the underlying relations within a context. For example, If Sally is looking for someone to help her to move a box full of books, she knows that Peter will be good at it while Andy will not be strong enough to help and James will be the ideal person to approach for help.*

One, however, has to be mindful that being so flexible can be a double-edged sword because on the one hand, it allows one to view and decipher one's experiences relationally but on the other, the application of such relational associations might at times prove to be unworkable in some instances. How one depicts the world can be easily blinded by how one structures it through the use of language. Nonetheless, the concepts within RFT do provide a good foundation for the core processes that help to mould the ACT psychological flexibility model.

#### 4.2.6.3 The ACT Psychological Flexibility Model

The ACT psychological flexibility model (or unified model) is defined as: *‘a set of coherent processes that applies with precision, scope and depth to a wide range of clinically relevant problems and to issues of human functioning and adaptability’* (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2012).

ACT’s purpose is to increase the psychological flexibility of a person by helping him or her to be in contact with the present more fully and as a conscious human being, and, based on what the situation affords, to change or persist in behaviour in order to achieve valued ends (Hayes & Strosahl, 2004). In order to understand how the psychological flexibility model works, one should start with what psychological inflexibility means (see Figure 1).

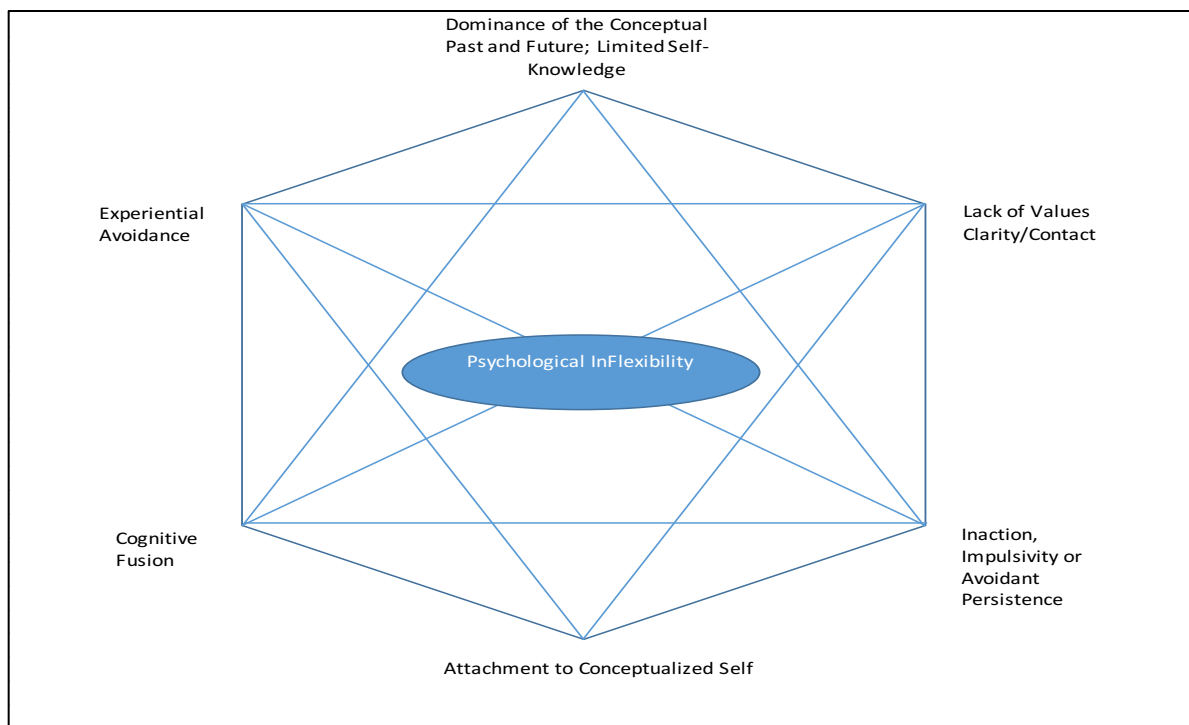


Figure 1 – Psychological InFlexibility Model (p 62, Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2012)

The ACT model of psychological inflexibility can also be considered as an ACT model of psychopathology. This is because according to Hayes et al (2006), each point as shown on the hexagon diagram above corresponds to one of the six processes that are hypothesised to cause human suffering and psychopathology. Psychological inflexibility, as depicted in the middle of the model, is the cumulative interaction of all the processes. The six processes are: 1) experiential avoidance; 2) cognitive fusion; 3) dominance of the conceptualised past and future and limited self-knowledge; 4) attachment to the conceptualised self; 5) lack of values clarity or contact; and 6) inaction, impulsivity, or avoidant persistence.

#### **4.2.6.4 Experiential avoidance**

This is classified as the *'attempt to control or alter the form, frequency, or situational sensitivity of thoughts, feelings, sensations or memories'* (Hayes, Wilson, Gifford, Follette, & Strosahl, 1996). Accordingly, experiential avoidance is a by-product of one's ability to evaluate, to predict and to avoid events through one's cognition and language. When an individual has the ability to predict and evaluate, he or she will be able to categorise his or her feelings, and will also be able to consider what are good or bad experiences. When given a choice, an individual is likely to choose to think about good instead of bad experiences. Such avoidance, however, can in some instances be paradoxical. For example, when one suppresses a negative thought, Y, this action is accompanied by a verbal rule not to think about Y. However, in specifying Y, this tends to also evoke thoughts about Y. Similarly trying to suppress emotions will only end up evoking the emotions. Thus, in both of these situations being experientially avoidant will be fruitless.

#### **4.2.6.5 Cognitive Fusion**

Cognitive fusion means the propensity of an individual to get stuck in the content of his own thoughts, thus hindering himself from using other means to help himself or adjust his behaviour. It is a natural process when a person starts to think, however this can become problematic when that person's thoughts become fused. That is to say, that person will be looking at the world through a coloured lens that has been tainted with the language that is associated with the thought.

#### **4.2.6.6 Dominance of the Conceptualized Past and Future; Limited Self-Knowledge**

In this instance, humans spend too much time ruminating about failures in the past and fear about the future. This rumination leads to cognitive fusion and experiential avoidance. The presence of cognitive fusion and experiential avoidance pulls a person away from an awareness of her present private experience. For example, the feelings, thoughts and sensing one experiences at the present moment will be readily replaced by the past experiences of emotions such as fear, anger and sadness. Such a form of cognitive fusion creates experiential avoidance as evidenced by research done on experiential avoidance and alexithymia, which were found to be highly correlated. (Hayes et al, 2004; Hayes et al, 2006).

#### **4.2.6.7 Attachment to the Conceptualised Self**

From an early age, humans learn verbal processes to describe themselves, for example; how old we are, what we like, what we dislike. These verbal processes gradually become our mode of communication with others. With the ability to formulate, describe, predict and evaluate, information becomes stories that are constant. Layers are either added or subtracted so that we can relate to others what we have done, what we have learned and what problems we are having. In doing this, we build a ‘conceptualised self’ in this process of storytelling. (Hayes et al, 1999). The ‘conceptualised self’ thus will only believe what has been evaluated and articulated but unfortunately this belief is just a juxtaposition of what has been formulated verbally and is supposedly an objective perspective of an event. Thus, what appears to be real as told by our internalised story teller can only be ‘real’ in the context of our own concoction concerning an event. The stories do not provide real solutions to solve any impending issues. This results in the ‘conceptualised self’ feeling stuck because it is constricted by its own inflexible behavioural patterns.

#### **4.2.6.8 Lack of Values Clarity or Contact**

According to Hayes et al (2004), values are chosen qualities of life and they are represented by ongoing patterns of behaviour. To these researchers, values are about how we choose to live our lives in a meaningful way and values are also the compass that helps us navigate our lives. Values, unlike goals, are not evaluated, instead they serve as a standard for other things to be evaluated by. When someone experiences experiential avoidance, he or she will find it difficult to determine what really is important in his or her life. For example, if someone grew up without



experiencing affections, it is not likely that he or she will outwardly show care and concern to others because choosing to be not caring seems to be a better option.

#### **4.2.6.9 Inaction, Impulsivity, or Avoidant Persistence**

When a person has chosen not to do anything about, or react impulsively to, his own stuck thoughts, he sabotages the opportunity to work towards value-actioned goals. This is because all these inflexible approaches bring only short term relief, which can cripple one's abilities to look at other positive and possible goals that could enrich and provide greater meaning to one's life.

#### **4.2.6.10 Psychological Inflexibility**

Each of the six core problems delineated contribute to psychological inflexibility. When we are too caught up with thoughts, feelings and emotions, we are trapped in a continuous cycle that prevents us to be present. We will not be able to step out and take stock of the situation. The time spent on ruminating about the past and worrying about the future takes us away from living our lives in accordance with what matters to us most.

What then should one look to so as to deal with these core problems as described above? We will next describe the six therapeutic processes of ACT which promote psychological flexibility. The six therapeutic processes are : 1) Acceptance; 2) Cognitive Defusion; 3) Being Present; 4) Self as Context; 5) Defining Valued Directions; and 6) Committed Action.

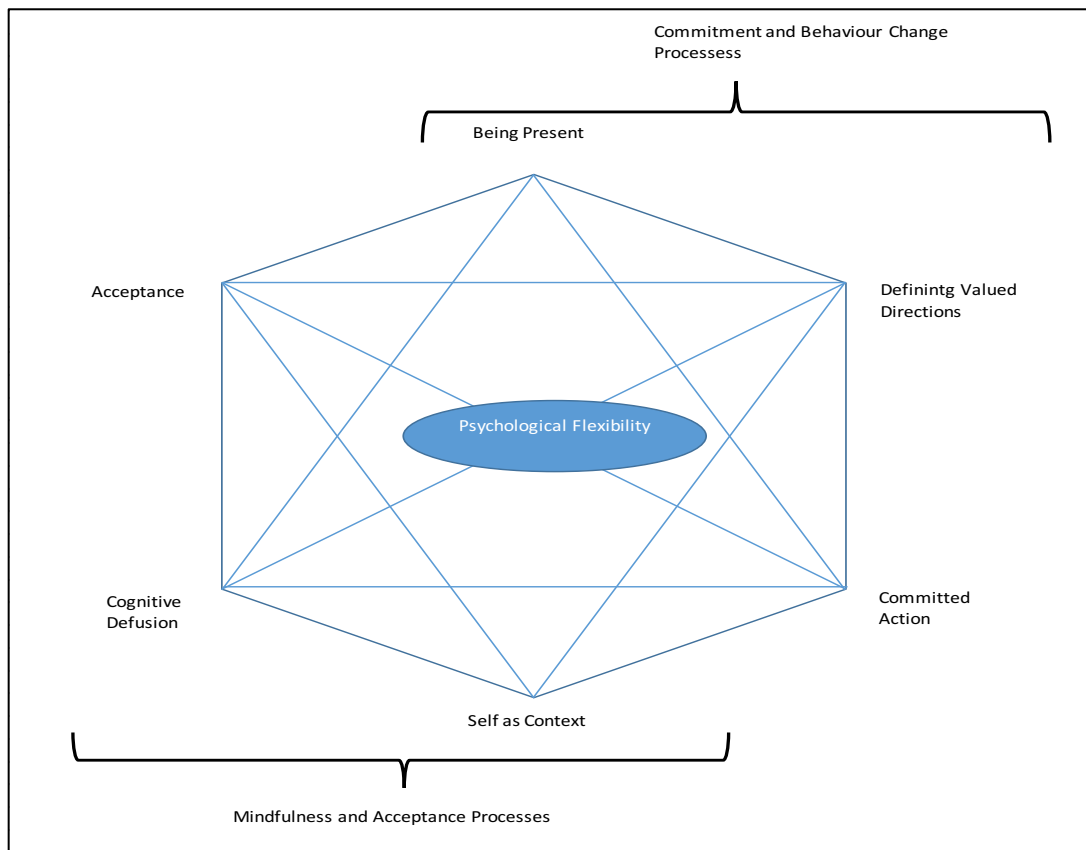


Figure 2 – Psychological Flexibility Model (p 62, Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2012)

#### 4.2.6.11 Acceptance

Acceptance in ACT is the opposite of experiential avoidance. Instead of running away from events, an individual is encouraged to embrace them as they are and not to try to alter the events which usually would cause unnecessary psychological harm. For example, people who are filled with anxiety are taught to treat anxiety as nothing more than a feeling and not to fight it. Acceptance is not a panacea, rather it is a method to help individuals to move towards values-based actions. Acceptance methods include exercises that expose individuals to previously avoided

events without falling back to the safety behaviours they are accustomed to, for example exercises entitled the tin can monster, the unwanted party guest and passengers on the bus (ACBS).

#### **4.2.6.12 Cognitive Defusion**

As we learn that when we fuse our thoughts, feelings and emotions, we naturally get stuck spiralling downwards into an abyss. To prevent ourselves from getting stuck, we need to learn how to get ourselves ‘unstuck’ in those situations. Defusion means that instead of being enslaved by what seems to be the literal meaning of a word within a context, a word should be just taken as being a word. In doing so, a context which is not literal will be created devoid of the entanglements of thoughts. This in essence will create behavioural flexibility that is linked to chosen values.

#### **4.2.6.13 Being Present**

When one is in a problem solving mode, one will spend less time in making contact with the present. This is because when a person tries to solve problems, he or she is looking at the trajectory of past events and trying to rationalise how these events have become the result of the present consequences he or she is engulfed in. This will then lead the individual to visualize and look at solutions that will mould an ideal future. On the contrary, when a person is in contact with the present moment, he or she is able to respond flexibly and open to new possibilities within the current situation because he or she is able to defuse ongoing thoughts, feelings and emotions in a non-judgmental manner – also known as ‘*self-as process*’ (Hayes et al, 1999).

#### 4.2.6.14 Self-As-Context

Different from being too attached to the *conceptualised self*, *self-as-context* is when an individual starts to experience the ‘I’, that is not tied to the content of the events. To get a sense of ‘I’ as the focus, the therapist will use metaphors or experiential exercises such as *letting go of identity* (Walser and Westrup, 2007). Through this process, individuals will be able to get a better sense of themselves and become observers. This is also known as ‘perspective taking’ (McHugh & Stewart, 2012), where these individuals are able to see the experience they are having. As Hayes et al (1999) put it,

*When people are asked many questions about their history or experience, the only thing that will be consistent is not the content of the answer, but the context or perspective in which the answer occurs. “I” in some meaningful sense is the location that is left when all the content differences are subtracted. (p.185).*

According to Luoma et al (2007), consciousness and awareness are not easy to access; there is a need to look at human language. They believe that language can lead to a sense of transcendence, that is a spiritual aspect of human experience. According these researchers, to have a transcendent sense of self is to allow individuals to be aware of their experiences and yet not to be attached to them. That is to say, self-as-context is the locus where an individual observes (*perspective taking*) the ongoing and yet free of entanglements.

#### **4.2.6.15 Defining Valued Directions**

ACT, unlike CBT, is a therapy that encourages individuals to move towards valued living. Instead of being a passive passenger on the journey to psychological flexibility and be enslaved by their inner experiences, individuals will engage in actions that will move them towards who and what they choose to be important to them in their lives. To do this, individuals will need to choose the values that they view are important to them. Individuals' values are freely chosen rather than being forced upon them by their circumstances or by other people. Unlike goals, values do not have an expiry date, they do not get crossed out once they are achieved. Living a valued life is about enjoying the present as one works towards the goal.

#### **4.2.6.16 Committed Action**

When individuals are not psychologically flexible, they are unlikely to come up with and sustain actions that are in line with their own values. In ACT, committed actions are referred to as *'a values-based action designed to create a pattern of action that is itself values-based'* (p 95, Hayes et al, 2012). To these researchers, it means that behaviours are constantly redirected to create larger and larger patterns of flexible and effective values-based behaviour. That is to say, individuals will evaluate, moderate and modify their behaviours to achieve the goals they have set.

#### **4.2.6.17 Psychological Flexibility**

In summary, when the six therapeutic processes come together, an individual will become psychologically flexible. That is '*contacting the present moment as a conscious human being, fully and without needless defense – as it is and not as what it says it is – and persisting with or changing a behaviour in the service of chosen values.*' (p, 96 Hayes et al, 2012)

Now that we have explained what CBT and ACT are, it necessary to discuss why ACT should be used in dealing with workplace bullying rather than CBT. To do this effectively, a comparison will next be made between the two types of therapies.

### **4.3 Why Is Acceptance Commitment Therapy Chosen For This Research?**

#### **4.3.1 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Acceptance Commitment Therapy**

When an individual becomes a victim of workplace bullying, he or she will act automatically and will react to the episode. That is, the individual will counteract the bullying either through the use of problem-focused (for example confronting the bully, seeking redress) or emotion-focused (self-deprecation and self-blame) solutions (Folkman and Lazarus, 1985). Although both of these methods are able to provide some form of temporary relief from the bullying episode, they might be unable to prevent the individual from ruminating (upon questions such as why is this happening to me? What should I do next to ensure that this bullying stops?) and experiencing fear, both of which could gradually lead to stress. One of the most prominent forms of behaviour therapy used to deal with stress has been Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. Since

its introduction and success in dealing with various disorders and distorted thoughts, it has become the 'go to' tool for most therapists. In recent years, the third wave form of therapy known as Acceptance Commitment Therapy has gathered momentum in the therapeutic world. While both have merits and deficiencies, which one will be suitable when it comes to dealing with people who have experienced workplace bullying? To support the decision to use the latter form of therapy for this research, it is, therefore, necessary to look at both of these therapies critically. In the following discussion, the focus will be on the similarities and differences between CBT and ACT.

#### **4.3.2 CBT vs ACT**

Hofmann & Asmundson (2008) stated that both CBT and ACT encourage individuals to look at using different strategies to regulate their maladaptive emotions. The therapies, however, do target different stages of the generative emotion process. (Gross, 1998, 2002; Gross & John, 2003; Gross & Levenson, 1997). The researchers believed that CBT promotes adaptive antecedent-focused emotion regulation strategies, whereas the acceptance strategies of ACT counteract maladaptive response-focused emotion regulation strategies, such as suppression.

CBT, which has a long history of application in various forms of disorders such as anxiety and phobias (Beck et al, 1985), substance abuse (Beck et al, 1993), personality disorder (Sperry, 1999), obsessive-compulsive disorder (Salkovskis, 1999), post-traumatic stress disorder (Ehlers and Clark, 2000), psychosis (Morrison, 2001), bipolar disorder (Newman, et al, 2002), is undoubtedly the most frequently used therapy. However, the question remains whether there is room for another newer type of therapy, a type of therapy that encourages an acceptance and

mindfulness based treatment approach, where the emphasis is not on trying to determine the root cause that creates the disorder and to suppress the emotions and thoughts which alter one's behaviour.

In a CBT therapeutic relationship which is based on collaboration, a positive therapist-patient interaction is encouraged. The core emphasis of the therapy is the solution of the issues the patient encounters. That is, steps in the therapy are carefully reasoned and transparent. Educating the patient is an active role that the therapist will take in the initial therapy sessions. The therapist is there to provide guidance to help patients to identify any misconceptions and automatic thoughts and to suggest adaptive solutions. Patients will then take over to play an active role in their own treatment, i.e. they will become experts in their own issues.

As mentioned, CBT is a process that is focused on problem solving. This will include the clarification of the problem, the desired goal and the means to achieve the goal. This can be done through CBT case formulation. The purpose of case formulation is to identify core beliefs that underlie misconceptions and associated automatic thoughts for successful intervention in the treatment. Through the process of problem reduction, problems that are identified with similar cause will be grouped together. When a major problem is identified, it is then broken down into components. Patients will need to ensure that their efforts to solve their problems are in line with their set goals, and they will need to be aware of their processes and thoughts so as to be able to identify irrational thoughts. These irrational thoughts are then presented as hypotheses. Both therapist and patient will engage in a dialogue known as the *Socratic dialogue* to discuss the evidence gathered to address the assumption. Then the patient will be asked to test the irrational



thoughts. This is done so as to test the patient's hypotheses. If the hypotheses are found to be invalid, the patient will be encouraged to modify them so that he or she will be able to get a realistic perspective about the real world.

ACT, on the other hand, uses the six therapeutic approaches: 1) acceptance; 2) cognitive defusion; 3) being present; 4) self as context; 5) values; and 6) committed action to ensure that individuals will become psychologically flexible.

Individuals are encouraged to embrace all their unwanted thoughts, feelings and emotions instead of running away from them (*experiential avoidance*). The aim is to help individuals to disentangle themselves from the constant struggle with these negative thoughts, feelings and emotions.

While CBT will want individuals to try to change and eliminate them, ACT teaches individuals just to accept them (*acceptance*). Individuals, through the use of exercises, will be exposed to feelings, thoughts or even emotions that they previously might not have been exposed to; not to run towards the comfort of familiar behaviours; to not amplify these uncomfortable feelings, thoughts and emotions; to take them merely as words and not to imbue the words with meaning.

In an ACT session, individuals are encouraged to devote time and energy to values-based actions rather than being in a state of constant rumination about the past and worry about the future. (*cognitive defusion*). When individuals are able to detach themselves from thinking of ways to

suppress their feelings or constantly trying to rationalise the issues, they will become more aware of their own presence (*being present*). They become non-judgmental and less critical about events as they occur and will instead be mindful about themselves, be aware of what is happening around them and able to take a step back to look at the situation through perspective taking (*self as context*). When individuals become observers to the events in which they are engulfed, they will be able to decide how they want to proceed without being curtailed by all the verbal processes (*relational framing*) that lead to cognitive fusion and experiential avoidance. In doing so, they will choose to move towards what they view to be important to them (*values*) and will come out with steps to fulfil these. (*committed actions*)

#### **4.3.3 CBT and ACT Research**

So what is research telling us about to these two therapies? It has been found that CBT has been fairly effective in dealing with stress experienced by employees when it is used as an individual-focussed programme (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). ACT research, on the other hand, has shown a correlation between ACT and better mental health and job performance (Bond & Bunce, 2003; Bond & Flaxman, 2006), and between ACT and event job-related learning (Bond & Flaxman, 2006). ACT has also been shown to produce promising results in treating anxiety and depressive symptoms (Forman, Herbert, Moitra, Yeomans, & Geller, 2007), social anxiety (Dalrymple & Herbert, 2007), and psychosis (Gaudiano & Herbert, 2006).

In comparison with CBT, ACT has been found to be better in treating chronic pain (McCracken, Vowles, & Gauntlett-Gilbert, 2007), eating pathology (Juarascio, Forman, & Herbert, 2010), and mixed mood-anxiety-interpersonal problems (Lappalainen et al, 2007).

CBT focuses on reducing the symptoms whereas ACT helps clients to engage in behaviours that are values based and this enhances the clients' ability to accept rather than change, suppress, or otherwise directly engage disturbing thoughts, feelings, and sensations (Eifert & Forsyth, 2005).

Larsson et al (2015) tasked their participants to use a restructuring, defusion or control strategy to manage negative thoughts. They found that those who adopted defusion strategy were comfortable in having and willing to experience negative thoughts, which in turn reduced their belief in the validity of those negative thoughts in comparison with participants who had chosen the other CBT related strategies.

Arch et al (2012), assessing the treatment mediation between traditional Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Acceptance Commitment Therapy for anxiety disorders, found that those who were exposed to ACT showed greater improvements for anxiety sensitivity and cognitive fusion than those exposed to CBT.

Researchers have also found that ACT is better able to improve psychological flexibility than CBT in government employees (Flaxman, 2006), university students with anxiety or depression (Forman, 2007), people with mood and interpersonal problems (Lappalainen et al, 2007), and people with clinical depression (Zettle et al, 2009; Zettle & Hayes, 1986).

#### 4.3.4 CBT or ACT for Workplace Bullying

All the research on workplace bullying clearly shows that those who experience bullying do suffer some forms of psychopathology. But what is the best therapy to use to help those who suffer from workplace bullying?

As described CBT therapy seeks to look at the root causes of why individuals have maladaptive behaviours. In the case of workplace bullying, CBT will require an individual to revisit or to focus on the episode or episodes of bullying they have experienced. In doing so, it is very likely that the maladaptive emotions of fear, anger and depression will be evoked. Problem reduction, in this instance, is unlikely to be as easy as simply identifying an irrational thought and challenging it. Although, to date, there is no research to show what might happen when CBT is used on someone who is being bullied or has been bullied, it is not difficult to see the likely reluctance of such an individual to revisit a bullying episode. No one wants to deal with discomfort; everyone chooses to avoid it (in ACT, this will be considered as *experiential avoidance*). Such reluctance is similar to a fight-flight response in which an individual seeks to reduce stress (that is discomfort) in order to be in control (Cisler et al, 2010, Gross, 1998).

While CBT prescribes a systematic process in its therapy, ACT promotes *psychological flexibility* through a six interrelated component process. Four of the components have been researched and validated – *acceptance* (Hayes, Bissett et al, 1999), *defusion* (Masuda, Hayes, Sackett & Twohig, 2004), *values and actions* (Paez-Blarrinaa et al, 2008) and *self as context* (Williams, 2007). ACT does not require individuals to look for a problem and hypothesise

scenarios, instead it encourages individuals to accept feelings, thoughts and emotions and not to suppress them; to recognise the fears, anguish, frustrations that might manifest as a result of being bullied; and to discourage individuals from getting fused by those emotions. ACT makes individuals aware of how fusion can impact them and distance them from what matters to them most – their values. Instead of spending time ruminating about the bullying they have suffered and its impact (present and future) upon them, ACT leads individuals to take steps to avoid the maladaptive behaviours manifested of result of bullying, and to work on actions that will bring them closer to their values.

ACT is not about teaching individuals to run away from the negative emotions or feelings that arise from bullying. Rather, it is about enabling an individual to make the best choices in the given present situation.

ACT prevents the magnification of feelings, emotions and thoughts that are generated by rumination on a problem. It redirects an individual's focus to work on what matters to him or her and in so doing ensures that actions will always be driven by values instead of problems. It seems therefore, that in relation to helping people who have been bullied, the use of ACT as a coping strategy can be an alternative to CBT or other Third Wave strategies. The individual will be in the driver seat able to control how he or she wants to deal with maladaptive thoughts, emotions and behaviour in accordance with a value action plan that is self-chosen and self- devised.

There is no research to date to show the application of either CBT or ACT as a coping strategy for workplace bullying. Given the advantages of ACT over CBT as discussed earlier, this PhD research focus on the use of ACT as a therapy for those who have suffered from workplace bullying.

#### **4.4 Research Questions**

Research has found that individuals who are being bullied at work experience fear, anxiety, helplessness, depression and paranoia (Hogh, Mikkelsen, & Hansen, 2011) and to date, apart from examining some form of active or passive strategy (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), to evade the bullying experience, no research has dealt with how individuals deal directly with the psychopathologies themselves. There is a need for this, as bullied individuals find it difficult to admit being bullied. They have to contend with a loss of face and the diminishing of their professional status. To seek help to deal with psychopathologies is a step too far for many of them to tread. In addition, seeking help through therapy can be costly, especially for those who have left their employment. Treatment is also time consuming. All of these can further exacerbate psychopathological symptoms. Thus, this thesis research is important, as the use of ACT as an intervention can be viable option because it is an intervention that provides individuals the ability to help themselves deal with their psychopathologies.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT) have both been shown to help individuals deal with psychopathologies. CBT helps individuals to find a root cause of their emotions and maladaptive thoughts and to establish ways to control them. ACT uses acceptance and helps individuals to work towards the fulfilment of their values. CBT helps

individuals retrace their steps to identify triggers and adopt ways to prevent the activation of these triggers. ACT helps individuals to recognise and accept emotions and maladaptive thoughts re direct them towards their values.

As an alternative to CBT, ACT has been chosen as the subject of this thesis because it is an intervention that individuals can use in workplace bullying, helping themselves without a therapist. It is a self-administered intervention that individuals can use to face their negative thoughts and emotions. ACT teaches individuals practical skills to help them distance themselves psychologically from unwarranted emotions and maladaptive thoughts. Individuals are enabled to break the cycle of rumination and to be psychologically flexible in their approach to a workplace bullying experience. It has to be stated that the application of ACT as an intervention, to be tested in this thesis, is not about accepting bullying or bullying behaviours. This thesis seeks to investigate whether ACT, which has already been shown to help people with psychopathologies become psychologically flexible, would be equally beneficial to bullied victims whose experience of bullying has given rise to similar psychopathologies, such as sleep difficulties, depression and anxiety. Therefore, the research questions are:

- 1) Are bullied victims psychologically inflexible as compared to those who are not bullied?

As research has shown that individuals who are exposed to bullying tend to suffer from some forms of psychopathologies, which render them not being unable to break a cycle of rumination. Being psychologically stuck in a state of mind is likely to make such individuals inflexible in their thoughts, emotions and actions. Therefore, the first hypothesis to test in this

research will be:

*Individuals who are exposed to bullying will be less psychologically flexible than those who are not exposed to bullying.*

As ACT has been successfully used to help individuals deal with many types of psychopathologies, it has to be postulated that ACT can be useful for individuals who are exposed to workplace bullying. As symptoms suffered by individuals who are exposed to bullying are similar to those of individuals who suffer from stress and psychological disorders, the second research question is

2) Is ACT the right intervention to help bullied victims become psychologically flexible?

The second hypothesis will be

*The use of ACT intervention on individuals who are exposed to workplace bullying will help them to become more psychologically flexible as compared to those who did not receive any intervention.*

To effectively support the assumption that ACT is an useful intervention for bullied victims, it is important to show there is indeed a change in their psychological flexibility before and after they received the ACT intervention. The third research question will be

3) Will bullied victims show a change in their psychological flexibility after they have gone through an ACT intervention?



The third hypothesis will be

*Bullied victims who have gone through an ACT intervention will show an increase in their psychological flexibility score as compared to when they did not receive the ACT intervention.*

#### **4.5 Overall Summary**

Being bullied can spur individuals to react either in an active or passive way. These can include confronting or avoiding the bully. While these types of strategy can help bullied victims momentarily curb their bullying, the thoughts of why they are targets of bullying are not so easily dispense with. Feelings such as fear, resentment and anger are not easily subdued. Individuals suffering from bullying waste time and energy ruminating about these negative thoughts, emotions and feelings, and this can result in them being stuck in a loop (psychological inflexibility). They all too easily miss out on what matters to them most. It is, therefore, important that individuals are able to find a way to extract themselves from the vicious cycle of rumination so that they can be free from the shackles of their negative thoughts and emotions. This is where the introduction of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is important. In essence, this therapy helps individuals to become psychologically flexible through its six core processes : acceptance, cognitive defusion, self-as-context, being present, values and committed action. This is what this thesis research seeks to explore, that is to use ACT as a self-intervention strategy that victims can use to deal with the residual emotions, thoughts and feelings that result from their exposure to bullying in the workplace.

The following chapter will look at the prevalence of workplace bullying in Asia, specifically in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. This was done through a pre-research survey. The psychometric properties, reliability and validity of the tools which will be used in this thesis, the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) and the Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ), as well as a pilot study, will also be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 5 : Pre-Research Survey, Research Questions, Reviewing Of Tools And Pilot Study**

### **5. Pre-Research Survey, Research Questions, Reviewing of Tools and Pilot Study**

In this chapter, the discussion will focus on the preparatory work for this thesis. The chapter will start with the findings of a pre-research survey. A detailed account of the findings will be covered. The formulation of research questions and hypotheses is described, and the selected tools are reviewed; these are the Negative Act Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R, Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers, 2009) and the Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ, Bond, Lloyd & Guenole, 2013). The reasons for combining the two tools to become NAQWAAQ and a discussion of a pilot study to test out this research tool will also be discussed.

#### **5.1 Reasons for doing a Pre-Research Survey**

To begin, a pre-research survey was conducted to determine several issues, firstly, to find out whether workplace bullying was prevalent in Asia, especially in the selected countries: Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and China where the sample will be drawn from. One of the reasons for choosing samples from these countries is because the researcher was based in Hong Kong and was able to get participants from these countries to take part in the research through his own network. A second reason for conducting the pre-research survey in these countries was the growing number of research and reports that workplace bullying is common in them. For example, Sim & Sun (2012) found that people who have witnessed bullying in the Chinese workplace were more likely to report an increase in symptoms of physical or emotional strain. These witnesses to

workplace bullying also reported a decrease in job satisfaction and work commitment. Jiang, Dong & Wang (2012) reported in their sample of 240 employees in China found that workplace bullying has a positive correlation to depression and workers' job satisfaction. There have been newspaper reports, both in Singapore and Malaysia highlighting the issues of workplace bullying (*Straits Times*, Singapore, 24 February 2014 – Facing up to bullies at the workplace, and *Star Online*, Malaysia, 22 October 2013 – Bullying in the workplace). A third reason to conduct the pre-research survey was to investigate how individuals in these countries define and cope with, workplace bullying and their understanding as to how workplace bullying can be curbed, whether through organizational efforts or by legislation.

The following paragraph will detail the process and the findings of the pre-research survey. The survey can be found in Appendices 3 to 20.

## **5.2 Pre-Research Survey**

The purpose of the pre-research survey was to find out whether workplace bullying does happen in Asia, especially in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. This survey was vital as it helped to understand how participants in the areas selected for this research thesis view and understand workplace bullying. This pre-research survey comprised 9 questions (Boxes 1a and 1b – see Appendices 3 and 4):

1. Have you ever experienced bullying in the workplace?
2. Please describe the bullying you have experienced in the workplace.
3. Please describe what you think are considered as bullying in the workplace.

4. What do you think victims should do when they are being bullied in the workplace?
5. What do you think organisations should do to prevent bullying in the workplace?
6. Should there be legislation to deal with bullying in the workplace?
7. Do you think bullying in the workplace is a phenomenon that occurs outside of Asia?
8. Please elaborate why you think workplace bullying is a phenomenon that occurs outside of Asia.
9. Please elaborate why you think workplace bullying is a phenomenon that is prevalent in Asia.

### **5.2.1 Participants**

150 invitations were sent out to participants who worked in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia via email. Participants were from a convenient sample (personal contacts) and had agreed to participate in the survey. Participants were sent a link via Qualtrics, on line software to access the survey. The participants were required to provide their consent before they took the survey. They were required to answer nine questions (as delineated above). Some of the questions required them to provide either a Yes/No answer, while some of the questions required them to elaborate their answers. All participants were informed that the data collected would be anonymised and that they would have the right to withdraw their participation at any time. A total of 62 surveys were returned with 88 surveys not accounted for.

### **5.2.2 Pre-Research Survey Data**

In this section, the findings of the pre-research data will be discussed. In this part of the discussion, the findings of the pre-research data will be analysed. The analysis is separated into

3 sections: Section 1 – focused on Questions 1 – 3; Section 2 – focused on Questions 4 – 6; and Section 3 – focused on Questions 7 – 9.

#### **5.2.1.1 Section 1 - Questions 1 – 3**

The questions grouped under Section 1 sought to find out who amongst the participants had experience bullying and those who had not. Those who had not experienced bullying were asked to share their thoughts as to what they thought constituted workplace bullying. Bullying behaviours as described by both the bullied and non-bullied participants were collated and categorised.

A total of 62 participants were surveyed. Twenty-five participants (36%) had experienced bullying in the workplace, and thirty-seven participants (54%) had not. Those who reported having experienced bullying described their experiences in Table 1 (see Appendix 5).

Those who did not experience any bullying in the workplace were asked to describe what they thought was considered as bullying in the workplace. See Table 2 in Appendix 6.

From the behaviours described (experienced by those being bullied at work and those who considered what workplace bullying was – Tables 1 and 2, Appendices 5 and 6), there seemed to be a clear understanding between the two groups of participants of what kind of behaviours constituted bullying. Their responses provided a good insight into the participants' views and understanding of bullying behaviours.

Some observations are worth mentioning. There was a clear recognition that bullying in the workplace can be done by line managers or bosses (people in authority and power) and also by colleagues and peers. Verbal abuse was consistently classified as bullying behaviour. Sexual harassment behaviour (male to female and female to male) and anti-gay bullying was seen to be common. Being ostracised by others was also considered to be one of the bullying behaviours.

This survey, which was taken from participants from Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia, suggested that:

- 1) There was an understanding of what workplace bullying is.
- 2) Participants were clear as to what constitute bullying behaviours at work.
- 3) There was a recognition that bullying can be done by managers, colleagues and peers.

The various behaviours identified by the participants will be classified below.

#### **5.2.2.2 Classification of Experiences and Descriptions**

The experiences and descriptions of workplace bullying can be classified into:

- 1) Threats, verbal abuse and intimidation.
- 2) Derogatory comments on physical appearance, backgrounds and private life.
- 3) Being humiliated in connection with work and belittling.
- 4) Being asked to perform work below own level of competence and being given tasks that are set to fail.
- 5) Being ignored or ostracized.
- 6) Tactics (scheming) by insecure colleagues.

- 7) Interrogation and persistent criticism of work.
- 8) Being the subject of constant teasing.
- 9) Being subject to practical jokes.
- 10) Having views ignored.
- 11) Withholding opportunities for promotion.
- 12) Physical and sexual harassment.
- 13) Being assigned work no one wants to do.

The bullying behaviours identified in the pre-research survey echo those bullying behaviours used in the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) (Einarsen et al, 2009). (see Tables 3a and 3b in Appendices 7 and 8).

It was notable that the classified bullying behaviours from the pre-research survey were so closely related to those of the NAQ-R. Such a relationship indicated that the NAQ-R was a suitable tool to be used in the main research for this thesis.

#### **5.2.2.3 Section 2 - Questions 4 – 6**

The questions group under Section 2 asked participants their views on how workplace bullying could be addressed. They included: what workplace bullying victims could do to help themselves; what organizations could do to counteract workplace bullying; and whether legislation could prevent workplace bullying.

Questions 4 – 6 asked participants what victims should do when they were being bullied; what organizations should do to prevent workplace bullying; and whether there should be legislation to deal with bullying in the workplace. A few common points were identified (see Tables 4a – 4h from Appendices 9 to 16). Quoting the exact words of the participants, they were:



#### Question 4

1. Confront the bully.
2. Report the incident to a line manager.
3. Seeks help from a boss.
4. Seeks help internally HR.
5. Seeks help externally like a charity or NGO.
6. Seeks help from peers.
7. Ignore, make a joke about or laugh about the bullying.
8. Quit the job and leave the organization.
9. Accept it as a challenge to expand own knowledge and skills.

#### Question 5

10. Zero tolerance policy with clear rules and regulations.
11. Education.
12. A structured process for the identification, reporting and mitigating bullying.
13. A diverse and inclusive culture.
14. To have a collaborative culture.
15. An external mediator to deal with the bullying.
16. Create awareness through training and dissemination of information on workplace bullying.
17. Create a safe environment for the victims to open up about the bullying.
18. Victims to be coached to take appropriate actions to help themselves.

#### Question 6

19. Yes (20 times)

20. Absolutely! This will be first step in informing the public about what it is, and that it's wrong.
21. Yes, with heavy fines and possible jail.
22. Yes. This will provide protection and a clear avenue for both the bullied and their HR department.
23. Yes absolutely.. in some western countries there are govt appointed bodies established to provide impartial support to employees alongside Trade Unions who will represent individuals in cases of mistreatment, unfair dismissal etc.
24. Yes, but it is hard as the definition need to be clear and action taken to stop bullying need to be specific.
25. Yes, although most employees will not want to resort to taking legal action.
26. Yes. Not just for sexual preference but for any reason.
27. Yes, for sure. Hong Kong is pretty bad at that, there are much more other discrimination laws in the UK and EU.

The points listed above can be classified in three parts: what individuals should do, what organizations should do, and should workplace bullying be legislated?

#### **5.2.2.4 What individuals should do**

Points 1 to 9 fit neatly into what Lazarus and Folkman (1985) considered as problem-focused (active) or emotion-focused (passive) solutions. For example, problem-focused solutions included: confronting a bully; reporting an incident to a line manager; seeking help from a boss; seeking help internally from HR; seeking help externally from organizations such as a charity or NGO; seeking help from peers; quitting a job and leaving an organization. Ignoring, making a joke about or laughing about bullying or accepting it as a challenge to expand own knowledge and skills are emotion-focused solutions. The information provides an insight into what these participants

believe to be the best way to deal with bullying. Active and passive strategies, however, are not the best solutions when dealing with bullying. Confronting a bully, seeking help to stop bullying, or simply ignore and avoid a bully can result in increased victimization and retaliation from the bully (Aquino, 2000; Aquino & Byron, 2002; Rayner, 1999). Research conducted by Phelps & Jarvis (1994) has also confirmed that active and passive strategies are not the only coping approaches. They advocated acceptance, that is to be psychologically distant from the situation, redefining the situation or accepting the event as it is. This is line with what this thesis seeks to investigate: the use of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to help individuals to accept, and self-administer their own intervention to deal with, bullying. Acceptance in ACT is about not avoiding experiences and events, instead individuals are encouraged to embrace their experiences and events as they are without alteration.

#### **5.2.2.5 What organisations should do**

In points 10 to 16, the participants agree that organizations have a duty to ensure that there is a zero-tolerance policy against workplace bullying. They also feel that education is essential for HR personnel, line managers and leaders. A collaborative, diverse and inclusive cultures are advocated. Participants suggested that there should be an external mediator, that a safe environment should be created for victims to be able to discuss bullying openly, and that victims should be equipped with skills to help themselves. This is in line with findings by, for instance, Kivimäki, Elovainio & Vathera (2000) that when organizations take steps to prevent workplace bullying they gain because employees will feel safe and happy to work and this can help to reduce

sickness absenteeism, disengaged and unhappy employees (Hollis, 2016), loss of productivity (Mitchell and Bates 2011), turnover (Hoel and Cooper, 2000a).

#### **5.2.2.6 Should workplace bullying be legislated?**

34 participants expressed their views with regards to whether legislation is needed to deal with workplace bullying. 25 (40.3%) participants answered yes, 2 (3.2%) were unsure, 7 (11.3%) said No and 19 did not respond. Some of their comments were:

*“Absolutely! This will be the first step in informing the public about what it is, and that it's wrong.”*

*“Yes. This will provide protection and a clear avenue for both the bullied and their HR department.”*

*“Don't think it is practical.”*

*“I do not believe this is helpful. Education is the first step.”*

While some of the participants felt that legislation might not be helpful, majority of them felt that legislation was necessary to provide clarity to organizations as to what constitutes bullying in the workplace. To reflect this, and the fact that more and more people are becoming aware of workplace bullying through print and social media (for example, SCMP, 6 August, 2013; SCMP, 22 Oct 2016), countries in Asia are under pressure to think seriously about enacting legislation to protect employees. This process has begun: for example, in 2013, the Japanese Institute for Labour Policy and Training published *“Recommendations for Prevention and Resolution of Workplace Power Harassment”* to protect those bullied at work (Naito, 2013).

*An article in the Hong Kong English newspaper, the South China Morning Post, reported on 6 August 2013 that 54% of 509 people polled by telephone said that they had been victims of at least one type of workplace bullying. A third of those polled had suffered verbal insults and a quarter had been singled out for tasks or isolated by colleagues from social activities. More than 68% of the respondents reported to be bullied by people higher up the office hierarchy.*

Another article, one which highlighted the crisis of Japanese employees working themselves to death, was reported in the South China Morning Post, 22 Oct 2016. This has been coined the Karoshi crisis. A case cited in the article mentioned a young woman, Matsuri Takahashi, who in 2015 ended her life because she was suffering from exhaustion due to overwork, depression and bullying.

To date, apart from Australia (Fair Work Act, 2009) and Gibraltar (Employment (Bullying at Work) Act, 2014), western countries do not have legislation focusing on workplace bullying. Bullied individuals in countries that do not have legislation on workplace bullying must seek redress and recompense through legal proceedings using existing legislation that can be loosely interpreted as dealing with bullying in the workplace. Countries with such legislation include: the United Kingdom (Equality Act, 2010, Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974, Protection from Harassment Act, 1997 and Employment Rights Act, 1996), New Zealand (Employment Relations Act, 2000 and Health and Safety in Employment, 2002); Sweden (Ordinance of the Swedish National Board of Occupational Safety and Health); the Netherlands (Working Conditions Act, 2007); Ireland (Employment Equality Act, 1998); and Canada, British Columbia (Workers' Compensation Act, 1996). In Asia, only Singapore has legislation which can be interpreted to

cover workplace bullying (Protection from Harassment Act (Chapter 256A), 2014 which covers harassment and unlawful stalking).

When a country lacks proper legislation to address workplace bullying, it is very much up to the courts to interpret the existing non-workplace bullying legislation to ensure a judgment against the perpetrator of an act of bullying. However, that does not guarantee that bullies or organizations will be prosecuted and that victims will be successful in seeking recompense.

So how can workplace bullying be curtailed? For now, the responsibility of workplace bullying prevention lies with organizations. Organizations with policies to address harassment and bullying in the workplace will need to ensure that their policies are implemented properly and are used effectively (Cowan, 2011; Woodrow & Guest, 2014). Organizations that do not have any form of policies to deal with workplace harassment and bullying will suffer severe disadvantages. This is because, when employees become victims of adverse workplace mistreatment, they will realise that the organizations they work for do not offer any avenue for reporting workplace harassment and bullying. As a result organizations will be faced with a plethora of further effects, such as sickness absenteeism (Kivimäki et al, 2000) and loss of productivity (Mitchell and Bates, 2011).

### 5.2.2.7 Section 3 - Questions 7 - 9

In the questions grouped under Section 3, participants were asked whether they thought workplace bullying was a phenomenon that occurred either inside or outside of Asia. They were asked to elaborate on their views.

The questions asked participants whether they thought bullying in the workplace was a phenomenon that occurred outside Asia, to elaborate why they thought so, and to say if they thought bullying in the workplace was prevalent in Asia. This information is vital for the research because if there were to be no evidence of bullying in the workplace taking place in Asia, the purpose of the research will be futile. A few interesting points were identified. See Tables 5a – 5d (See Appendices 17 – 20). They were:

1. 31 (50%) participants thought that bullying was a phenomenon that happened outside Asia, 6 participants (9.6%) thought bullying occurred in Asia and 25 (40.3%) did not respond.
2. Of the 31 who said yes, 21 of them believed that workplace bullying was a global issue and 10 of them believed that workplace bullying was based on culture.

Some of the statements made by the participants as follow:

*“I think it is a worldwide workplace issue. The pressure of work and family make many people angry and they take that anger and frustration out on colleagues and other workers.”*

*“My experience of it was outside Asia.”*

*“It happens all over the world.”*

*“Personality dictates bullying but is further enhanced in cultures where education and accountability for such actions are not legislated. In this way countries outside Asia (excl. Aus and NZ) are more likely to have bullying but it is not restrictive to Asia.*

*“I have lived and worked internationally and whilst I have not been a victim of abuse personally, I have observed it and seen it written about in other locations (Europe, USA and Middle East).”*

*“From my time working in the United States, I have witnessed it first-hand.”*

*“I have worked in other countries beyond Asia, as seen it happen!”*

*“Surely you must be joking. It is a global phenomenon.”*

*“Bullying is everywhere.”*

*“It occurs everywhere.”*

*“I have experienced it outside of Asia.”*

*“Human nature. There are bullies everywhere.”*

*“I have observed it in numerous situations elsewhere, not least in military service. It’s a worldwide phenomenon.”*

*“I have seen it to be more overtly prevalent in the US and Europe.”*



*“Bullying can happen anywhere when there is people. It just depends on the severeness and frequency.”*

*“The HK culture itself - no benchmark with neighbouring countries in Asia to compare this against (think China, it's even worse).”*

#### **5.2.2.8 Summary of the Pre-Research Survey**

Now that the results of the pre-research survey have been discussed, the following section will provide a summary of the findings and how the findings are important to the main research of this thesis.

The results obtained from this survey are interesting and highlight a few key points:

- 1) Workplace bullying is observable and does happen in Asia.
- 2) Bullying behaviours identified are aligned with that used in NAQ-R.
- 3) Strategies identified to counteract workplace bullying are similar to those suggested by Folkman and Lazarus (1985).
- 4) Legislation can be used to ensure organizations have policies to prevent workplace bullying.
- 5) Education and creating awareness of the phenomenon are seen as equally important.

The information obtained in this pre-research survey provided a good basis to move forward to conduct research for this thesis.

### **5.3 What next? – Research idea, hypotheses, research tools and pilot study**

In the following paragraphs, the discussion will focus on the research questions and hypotheses, a review of the selected tools – Negative Act Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R, Einarsen et al., 2009) and Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ, Bond et al, 2013), and a results of the pilot study.

#### **5.3.1 Research Questions**

The following research questions were established because, after looking at therapies (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) that are used to help individuals to deal with psychopathologies, it was decided in this research to identify an intervention that victims could administer to help them deal with residual negative thoughts and emotions as a result of being a victim of workplace bullying. The therapy chosen for this research was Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, the reasons for this choice will be explained below.

As individuals who are exposed to bullying will suffer from some form of psychopathologies, such as sleep difficulties (Hansen, Hogh, Garde & Persson, 2014); psychological distress (Nielsen, Hetlan, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2012); mental disorder (Lahelma, Lallukka, Laaksonen, Saastamoinen, & Rahkonen, 2010); stress and PTSD (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004), they are likely to be in a state of psychological inflexibility (Forman, Herber, Moitra, Yeomans & Geller, 2007; Arch, Wolitzky-Taylor, Eifert, & Craske, 2012; & Fledderus, Bohlmeijer, Pieterse & Schreurs, 2011). This can result in them feeling trapped

in negative thoughts and emotions that can inhibit values-based actions. Thus, the first research question and hypothesis are:

#### Research Question 1

- 1) Are bullied victims psychologically inflexible as compared to those who are not bullied?

The first hypothesis

*Individuals who are exposed to bullying will be less psychologically flexible than those who are not exposed to bullying.*

Research has reported that ACT is a useful intervention tool for individuals who have mood disorders, anxiety, depression and psychosis (Lappalainen, Lehtonen, Skarp, Taubert, Ojanen & Hayes, 2007; Forman, Herbert, Moitra, Yeomans, & Geller, 2007; Dalrymple & Herbert, 2007; and Gaudiano & Herbert, 2006). These psychopathologies are similar to those experienced by victims of workplace bullying. This investigation, therefore, seeks to see whether ACT is suitable to be an intervention that bullied victims can adopt to help themselves. The second research question and hypothesis are:

#### Research Question 2

- 2) Is ACT the right intervention to help bullied victims become psychologically flexible?

The second hypothesis

*The use of ACT intervention on individuals who are exposed to workplace bullying will help them to become more psychologically flexible as compared to those who did not receive any intervention.*

### Research Question 3

- 3) Will bullied victims show a change in their psychological flexibility after they have gone through an ACT intervention?

The third hypothesis will be

*Bullied victims who have gone through an ACT intervention will show an increase in their psychological flexibility score as compared to when they did not receive the ACT intervention.*

To answer the research questions and hypotheses, it was planned that the actual research would be conducted in two parts. The first part would include the administration of a measure that would help to determine whether those being exposed to bullying would have low psychological flexibility. The following paragraph would discuss this measure in detail. The measure is comprised of two tools – Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) and Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ). The second part of the actual research would be made up of skills training sessions to help individuals to become psychologically flexible, an integral part of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and this would be discussed in the next chapter.

### **5.3.2 Research Tools**

In the following paragraphs, the discussion will focus on the psychometric properties, reliability, and validity of both the Negative Acts Questionnaire-R (NAQ-R) and Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ). This discussion is necessary because these tools will be used as the questionnaires for the main research for this thesis.

#### **5.3.2.1 Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R)**

The Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) is a tool devised to measure exposure to bullying in the workplace. NAQ-R has 22 statements that describe negative acts covering personal bullying, work-related bullying and physical intimidating bullying. It has been noted by the researchers (Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers, 2009) that the questionnaire is to be used as “*an inventory to measure frequency, intensity and prevalence of workplace bullying and not as a diagnostic instrument*”. This was as intended to be the case for this thesis research.

To explain why this questionnaire is appropriate for this thesis research, in the following sections its psychometric properties, reliability and validity will be discussed.

#### **5.3.2.2 NAQ-R - Psychometric Properties**

This revised version of the tool is based on the previous Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ - Einarsen & Raknes, 1991, 1997 and Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001), which was devised

based on literature reviews and a series of case studies (Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers, 2009). The original NAQ contained 23 items that described negative acts of both a personal and work-related nature. On the surface, NAQ, which has high internal consistency, good face and construct validity, seemed to be a good measure but that was not to be the case. This was because some items of the NAQ measure were constructed based on the perspectives of severely affected targets specifically from the Nordic countries, where most bullying research had been conducted. It was also found that some other shortcomings occurred within the NAQ tool. For example, when the tool was translated into English, the face validity of some items became questionable while other items showed cultural bias. There was also concern with regards to the factor structure of the tool. To ensure that NAQ could be used widely and be applicable to bullying research in other countries, it was clear that a new version of the NAQ was needed. This new version would need to be a reliable and valid tool that could be used in various occupational settings and adaptable to cultures other than that of a Nordic nature.

This resulted in a new, 29-item version of the NAQ (Hoel, Cooper & Faragher, 2001 and 2004) and then subsequently to a 22-item version of the NAQ (Einarsen and Hoel, 2001; Nielsen, Skogstad, Matthiesen, Nielsen, Skogstad, Glasø, Aasland, Notelaers & Einarsen (2008). It was only in 2009 that Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers started to investigate the psychometric properties, factor structure and validity of the revised NAQ (NAQ-R). They wanted to see whether NAQ-R could measure exposure to bullying in the workplace. The researchers hypothesised that:

- NAQ-R would be negatively correlated with measures on subjective health and well-being and with the perceived quality of psychosocial work environment.

- Those exposed to bullying would have abusive or tyrannical leaders.
- NAQ-R could be associated with raised levels of sick leave, reduced work performance and increased intention to leave.
- NAQ-R could distinguish between targets and non-targets of bullying.
- NAQ-R could identify different groups of respondents based on the nature, frequency and severity of their bullying experiences.

Various measurements were used in the study. NAQ-R was used to determine exposure to bullying. The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12 : Grayson, Bridges, Duncanjones, & Goldberg, 1987) was used to measure mental and psychosomatic health. The Pressure Management Indicator (PMI : Williams & Cooper, 1998) was used to measure psychosocial work environment quality. Two scales (autocratic and destructive leaderships) were devised to measure exposure to bullying by an abusive or a tyrannical leader. To measure absenteeism, respondents were asked to state the days they were off work due to illnesses. To measure intention to leave, respondents were asked to choose from five options (never, rarely, sometimes, quite often and very often). Lastly, to measure work performance, respondents were asked to rate their present performance or productivity.

To test their hypotheses, the researchers sent out 12,350 questionnaires to employees in 70 organizations within the private, public, and voluntary sectors across Great Britain. A total of 5,288 questionnaires were returned with a response rate of 42.8%, ranging from 27% to 57% in the different organizations. 2,764 (52.4%) respondents were males and 2,508 (47.6%) were females.

### **5.3.2.3 NAQ-R - Reliability**

Based on the data collected from the sample of 5,288 employees, the researchers reported that the results obtained showed that the NAQ-R had a high internal stability with 3 underlying factors: person-related bullying, work-related bullying, and physical intimidating bullying. Correlations between the factors were found to be high, for example, the correlation between person-related and work-related bullying was .96, the correlation between work-related and physical intimidating bullying was .89, and the correlation between person-related and physical intimidating bullying was .83. The researchers also reported excellent internal consistency of the 22 items in the NAQ-R (Cronbach's alpha .90). Using a latent class cluster (LCC) analysis, NAQ-R was also found to be able to differentiate between groups of employees experiencing different levels of bullying.

### **5.3.2.4 NAQ-R - Validity**

To determine whether NAQ-R was a valid tool, both Pearson product-moment and Spearman rank order correlations were used to measure the relationship between NAQ-R with the three factors (work-related, person-related and physical intimidating bullying), measures of health (GHQ-12), sickness absenteeism, work performance and intention to leave.

The researchers reported that correlations between NAQ-R and GHQ-12 and psychosomatic complaints were statistically significant and moderately strong. NAQ-R was also found to be significantly correlated with self-rated work performance, sick leave and intention to



leave. With regards to the three factors, the strongest correlation was between NAQ-R with work related bullying and the weakest correlation was between NAQ-R and physical intimidating bullying. The researchers also found significant and fairly strong correlations between NAQ-R and work environment quality and leadership.

The results obtained by Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers (2009) indicated that NAQ-R was a reliable and valid tool that could be used to determine workplace bullying. This is important as NAQ-R is the chosen tool for this thesis research.

#### **5.3.2.5 Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ)**

In the following paragraphs, the discussion will focus on the psychometric properties, reliability, and validity of the Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ).

The Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ) contains 7 questions and is used to reliably measure psychological flexibility in relation to the workplace.

#### **5.3.2.6 WAAQ - Psychometric Properties**

In any discussion of the psychometric properties of WAAQ, it is essential to understand the reasons behind the development of WAAQ. To do this, it is necessary to look at earlier iterations of this tool which were used to identify psychological inflexibility in individuals. The following paragraphs will discuss the earlier iterations of WAAQ, namely Action and Acceptance Questionnaire (AAQ-I) and Action and Acceptance Questionnaire – Revised (AAQ-II). Thereafter,

the reasons for the development of WAAQ and how it is being used will be described.

#### **5.3.2.7 The Genesis - Action and Acceptance Questionnaire I**

The Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-Revised (AAQ-II, Bond et al, 2011) was used previously to measure psychological flexibility in the workplace. Despite the fact the results from a meta-analysis research of 27 studies reported that AAQ-I was able to predict depression, anxiety, general mental health, job satisfaction, future work absence and future work performance, with an average effect size of  $r=.42$  (Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda, & Lillis, 2006), AAQ-II was developed because ACT researchers found that the original Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (AAQ-I) needed to be revised. The decision to develop AAQ-II was due to the fact that AAQ-I was found to be unstable and not psychometrically sound. For example, there were found to be issues with its internal consistency, in which the alpha coefficient levels varied (.07 or less) when tested in various studies where different populations were used (Hayes, Stroschal, Wilson, Bisset, Pistorello, Toarmino, Polusny, Dysstra, Batten, Bergan, Stewart, Zvolensky, Eifert, Bond, Forsyth, Karekla, & McCurry, 2004). To address the issue of internal consistency in AAQ-I, Bond, Hayes, Baer, Carpenter, Guenole, Orcutt, Waltz & Zettle (2011) set out to develop a second version of the AAQ.

#### **5.3.2.8 The Modification – The development of AAQ-II**

Bond et al (2011) conducted research based on three studies. Study 1 focused on item generation, selection and exploratory factor analysis. Study 2 focused on confirmatory factor analysis. Study 3 focused on concurrent, predictive, discriminant, convergent and incremental validities. These studies were conducted across six samples with a total of 2,816 participants. They found that AAQ-II was a unidimensional measure that was content and construct valid. AAQ-II was deemed suitable to measure psychological inflexibility across different samples.

However, this tool was found to be limited in its application because it was not able to measure psychological flexibility in relation to work in areas such as job satisfaction, absenteeism, engagement, and task performance. AAQ-II was considered more suitable to measure general mental health, future work absence and job performance (Hayes et al, 2006). Therefore, to determine whether psychological flexibility does associate with variables related to work context, Bond, Lloyd and Guenole (2013) developed the Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ).

#### **5.3.2.9 Psychological Flexibility in the workplace – The Development of WAAQ**

To begin their investigation into the feasibility of developing a one factor tool that could be used to identify psychological flexibility in a work context, Bond, Lloyd and Guenole (2013) set out to conduct 3 studies. Study 1 focused on item generation and exploratory factor analysis. Study 2 focused on confirmatory factor analyses. Study 3 focused on the relative associations of

the WAAQ and AAQ-II to various criteria. In the following sections, each study will be discussed.

#### **5.3.2.10 Study 1 – WAAQ item generation**

In Study 1, 32 items that depicted how psychological flexibility manifested itself within the workplace were created. They included items that tested how people took goal-directed actions in the presence of difficult internal experiences (e.g. “I am able to work effectively in spite of any personal worries that I have”) and subtle item such as (e.g. “I can admit to mistakes at work and still be successful”). (p 8, Bond et al, 2013). The items were reviewed by three other ACT researchers and practitioners for their content validity and whether they would be able to assess psychological flexibility and inflexibility responses within a work setting. Two samples of 365 employees were asked to complete the 32 item WAAQ. After completing a common factor analysis of the 32 items, the researchers were left with 7 positively worded items they deemed as (and this was endorsed by ACT researchers and practitioners) suitable to assess psychological flexibility in the workplace.

#### **5.3.2.11 Study 2 – Confirmatory Factor Analyses**

In study 2, the researchers used confirmatory factor analyses to test the fit of the one-factor WAAQ and its structural invariance across two samples. Sample one comprised 191 employees of a large UK central government department and Sample 2 was made up of 127 employees who were UK professional, managerial and administrative workers. The total number of employees in the two samples was 318. Both samples filled in the WAAQ. The researchers found that the one

factor model provided a very good fit to the data they collected from the two samples and that the measures were invariant across the two samples.

#### **5.3.2.12 Study 3 – Comparison with AAQ-II and construct validity**

In study 3, the researchers wanted to look at the relative association of the WAAQ and AAQ-II to various criteria. They wanted to assess the criterion-related validity of both the WAAQ and AAQ-II. This was done by comparing what similar constructs were significantly correlated (convergent validity) and what constructs are correlated with theoretically expected variables (concurrent validity). The premise of these comparisons allowed the researchers to determine which tool would be suitable to measure and predict workplace functioning or stable variables such as general mental health. The researchers were also interested to compare WAAQ's incremental predictive validity with personality constructs such as the Big-5 factors of personality, since both assess individual characteristics that impact an individual's wellbeing and performance within a work context. A total of 745 participants (included the earlier four sample groups and 61 associate producers of a large UK media organization) completed the WAAQ. Other measures used were: AAQ-II (Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II, Bond et al, 2011), used to measure psychological inflexibility in general populations; General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12, Goldberg, 1978), used to measure general mental health; Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006), used to assess work engagement; Intrinsic Job Motivation and Intrinsic Job Satisfaction (Warr, Cook, & Wall, 1979); and the Big Five Aspect Scales (BFAS; DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007), used to measure personality traits. The researchers found that WAAQ was indeed negatively correlated with the AAQ-II with correlation

coefficients of .10, .30 and .50. WAAQ was also found to be negatively correlated with neuroticism and positively correlated with conscientiousness. All of this provided evidence for WAAQ's convergent validity. In terms of incremental predictive validity, the researchers concluded that work-related psychological flexibility accounts for the variance in work-related attitudes.

#### **5.3.2.13 Results – WAAQ's Reliability and Validity**

The results obtained in the three studies are sufficient to provide evidence that WAAQ is a valid and reliable tool to measure psychological flexibility in a work context. The researchers found that WAAQ was significantly associated with variables such as general mental health, neuroticism, conscientiousness, absenteeism, work engagement, dedication, job satisfaction and task performance.

The research conducted by Bond et al (2013) is important because it shows the suitability and usability of WAAQ in a work context. The significant association between WAAQ and general mental health, neuroticism, conscientiousness, absenteeism, work engagement, dedication, job satisfaction and task performance makes it applicable to individuals who have been exposed to workplace bullying. For example, individuals who have been exposed to workplace bullying have been reported to show high trait neuroticism (Brousse, Fontana, Ouchchane, Boisson, Gerbaud, Bourguet & Chamoux, 2008); reduced work engagement when bullying frequency was high (Yeung and Griffin, 2008); reduced job satisfaction (Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012); and increased absenteeism (Denhue, Bolman, Vollink & Pouwelse, 2012). The similar variables identified in

individuals who are not psychologically flexible and who are being exposed to bullying make WAAQ a suitable tool for this thesis research.

#### **5.4 Are NAQ-R and WAAQ the right tools for this thesis research?**

Based on research looking into the psychometric properties, reliability and validity of both NAQ-R and WAAQ, it is safe to believe that both tools are suitable to be used to identify bullying in the workplace and psychological inflexibility. In the following paragraphs, reasons will be given as to why both NAQ-R and WAAQ will be used for this thesis research.

##### **5.4.1 Justifications to use NAQ-R and WAAQ**

###### **5.4.1.1 NAQ-R – The right tool to determine exposure to workplace bullying**

To answer the research questions and test the hypotheses, it was necessary to look at using tools to elicit results that will support the hypotheses. To determine whether individuals are being exposed to workplace bullying, the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised – NAQ-R (Einarsen et al., 2009) has been used. There are a few reasons for choosing the NAQ-R. Firstly, it is an objective tool that focuses on bullying behaviour rather than subjective perspectives from the victims. Secondly, the research conducted by Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers (2009) confirmed that the NAQ-R had high internal consistency with person, work-related and physical intimidating bullying. Its 22 items were also found to be highly consistent and NAQ-R was found to be able to distinguish the different levels of bullying exposure in discrete groups of employees. Thirdly, at present there is no Asianised version of a similarly effective tool; what exists so far is unsuitable

to be used in this research. For example, the Malaysian Workplace Bullying Index (MWBI) designed by Kwan, Tuckey and Dollard (2014) is a tool that resulted from an exploratory study and was targeted specifically at the Malaysian population, it has elements which make it unsuitable to be used in this research. Similarly, the Chinese Workplace Bullying Scale (CWBS) designed by Li, Nie, Li, Wang and Zhao (2010) is too China-centric to make it suitable for this research. According to the findings in the pre-research survey, participants taken from Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia had a clear understanding of what behaviours constitute workplace bullying that was aligned with the NAQ-R. On 10 December 2013, permission was given by Professor Stale Einarsen for the use of the NAQ-R for this research. The permission was granted on the condition that the questionnaire would be used strictly for research purposes.

#### **5.4.1.2 WAAQ – The right tool to identify psychological flexibility in a work context**

To determine whether individuals are low in psychological flexibility when bullied in the workplace, the tool chosen is the Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire – WAAQ (Bond, Lloyd, Guenole, 2013). This tool has been chosen because Bond et al found that WAAQ was a valid and reliable measure of psychological flexibility in the workplace as compared with an existing Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II - Bond et al, 2011). This was because WAAQ significantly predicted a wide range of variables that were related to work: general mental health, job satisfaction, absenteeism, the degree of peoples' engagement and task performance. The AAQ-I and AAQ-II, on the other hand, are more suitable to measure a wide range of quality of life outcomes, such as depression, anxiety, general mental health, job satisfaction, future work absence and future job performance (Hayes et al, 2006). On 28 May 2014, permission was granted



by Professor Frank Bond of Goldsmith College for the use of WAAQ for this research.

#### **5.4.1.3 One or two tools? - NAQ-R and WAAQ or NAQWAAQ**

To investigate the above hypotheses, it makes sense to combine both NAQ-R and WAAQ together. The resulting new questionnaire (NAQWAAQ – see Appendices 25 and 29) has been used as the primary tool for this thesis and has been approved by the Ethics Committee, Birkbeck College, Department of Organizational Psychology. As NAQWAAQ is a questionnaire that is in English and includes colloquial terms such as “Sent to Coventry”,

*“Sent to Coventry” is an English idiom used to depict someone that is being ignored or ostracized. While the origin of this idiom is debatable, some believe this phrase originated during the English Civil War in the 1640s when prisoners of war were sent to Coventry, where they were ignored by the local people who did not want them there. (English idioms – see References’ section for link)*

a pilot study was conducted to determine:

1. Whether the terms used in NAQWAAQ are appropriate for participants from Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and China.
2. Whether the process of administration used is suitable, since the questionnaire was to be sent via an email link and whether there were concerns about confidentiality issues.
3. Any other difficulties participants might have while answering the questionnaire and any other comments they would like to offer with regards to the questionnaire.

NAQWAAQ comprises 32 questions that cover 22 bullying behaviours (NAQ-R), seven questions on psychological flexibility (WAAQ), and 3 questions on participants' experience of bullying.

In the section on bullying behaviours, participants are required to indicate from a five-category response scale of: Never (1); Now and Then (2); Monthly (3); Weekly (4); and Daily (5) to establish the frequency with which they have been subjected to bullying behaviours. The total score range is 22 – 110, calculated as the sum of the item responses. There are no references to the term “bullying” in the 22 questions, just to bullying behaviours.

For their experience of bullying in the workplace in the past 6 months, participants are presented with a five-category response scale: No (1); Yes, but only rarely (2); Yes, now and then (3); Yes, several times per week (4); and Yes, almost daily (5). They are asked to respond based on a given definition of bullying. The total score range is 3 – 15, calculated as the sum of the item responses. This is a form of self-labelling of their experience in the context of a victim, a witness or a bully. This differs from the original NAQ-R questionnaire, which only requires participants to self-label as a victim.

To determine participants' psychological flexibility, participants are given a seven-category response scale that ranges from: Never True (1); Very Seldom True (2); Seldom True (3); Sometimes True (4); Frequently True (5); Almost Always True (6) and Always True (7). The total score range is 7 – 49, calculated as the sum of the item responses. The higher the score, the greater the psychological flexibility.

According to Notelaers and Einarsen (2013), the cut off scores for NAQ-R are 33 and 45. Participants whose scores fall between 33 to 45 are considered to have suffered from a preliminary stage of bullying, while those who have scores above 45 are considered to have been targets or victims of severe bullying (p 673). These researchers decided to set these cut off scores to minimize the chances of misclassification, that is of being classified as a target while not being one (false positives: FP) or not being classified as a target while actually being one (false negatives: FN).

The WAAQ, unlike the NAQ-R, does not have a cut off score. Like the AAQ-II, WAAQ is used to assess psychological inflexibility (Bond et al, 2011) and not to diagnose psychiatric disorder (p 685, Bond et al, 2011). This tool comprises 7 questions and each comes with a seven-category response scale from Never True - 1 to Always True – 7. Participants who obtain high scores will be considered to have greater psychological flexibility compared with those who have low scores.

Since there is no cut off score which makes it difficult to classify psychological flexibility and psychological inflexibility, NAQWAAQ has been used to determine the degree of relationship and outcomes to get a holistic and complete guide (as suggested via email correspondence with Professor Bond, 9 January 2017). The relationship between bullying scores and psychological flexibility scores needs to be considered. As research question 1 and the first hypothesis seeks to look at whether those who are bullied will be less psychologically flexible than those who are not bullied, bullying scores will become a factor to consider when identifying the relationship between bullying and psychological flexibility.

## Research Question 1

- 1) Are bullied victims psychologically inflexible as compared to those who are not bullied?

### The first hypothesis

*Individuals who are exposed to bullying will be less psychologically flexible than those who are not exposed to bullying.*

For example, if someone who has a bullying score of 55 (which will be considered to be severely bullied) and a psychological flexibility score of 33 or below, this participant will be deemed to be psychologically inflexible, despite the fact that a psychologically flexible person would have a total score of 49 (that is scoring a score of 7 for each of the 7 questions).

## 5.5 Pilot Study

The aim of the pilot study is to determine whether the terms used in the questionnaire (NAQWAAQ) are suitable for the intended sample, to identify any process issues when administering the questionnaire and to uncover any difficulties participants might encounter when answering the questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire (NAQWAAQ), participants were required to answer the following questions:

- 1) How did you find the whole process? (For example, time taken to complete the questionnaire; did you have difficulties accessing the questionnaire?)
- 2) Did you encounter any difficulties answering the questionnaire (For example, were there questions that you did not understand?)

- 3) Were there any concerns you might have with the questionnaire or the whole process? (For example, issues about confidentiality)
- 4) Other comments?

### **5.5.1 Participants**

Participants were identified through the researcher's network (Linkedin, Facebook and personal network). An email invitation with the link of the questionnaire was sent to participants (See Appendix 21). A total of 23 (7 male and 16 female) participants were identified. Only 8 (5 female and 3 male) participants participated and answered the questionnaire. The pilot study was conducted between 29 February and 31 March 2016. Once the participants had agreed to take part in the pilot study, a second email to the participants was sent to inform them that they would need to sign a consent form before they could proceed with the questionnaire. In this correspondence, participants were told that upon the return of the consent form, they would be given a link to the questionnaire and that a debrief would be done after they had completed the questionnaire. The link to the questionnaire can be found in the References' section.

The email invitation, follow up email correspondence, consent form and debrief documents can be found in the Appendices 21, 22, 23 and 24.

### 5.5.2 Pilot Study - Data

Based on the data in Tables 6a and 6 b (see Appendices 26 and 27), a few comments were worthy of interest. In question 1, all participants were happy with the process and they did not report any difficulty assessing the questionnaire.

#### Question 1

How did you find the whole process? (For e.g. time taken to complete the questionnaire; did you have difficulties assessing the questionnaire?)

This question was asked because the questionnaire was only accessible by clicking on a link sent to the participants. Should there be any concerns in accessing the questionnaire link, an alternative such as a paper version of the questionnaire would need to be used. In addition, it was important to find out from the participants their perspective as to the structure and flow of the questionnaire (face validity) to ensure that the items in the questionnaire were able to elicit an accurate response from participants.

The following answers were verbatim statements by the participants.

Answers from the participants for Question 1:

*“The process is easy.”*

*“The questionnaire is straightforward and the interface easy to navigate.”*

*“It’s pretty good. The questions are straightforward and generally easy to answer.”*

The answers from the participants provided a good indication that asking participants to complete the questionnaire using a link was a viable option, and that there were no concerns regarding the structure and the flow of the questionnaire.

In question 2, there was no report that the questions were not understood. That was no issue with the content.

## Question 2

Did you encounter any difficulties answering the questionnaire? (For e.g. were there questions that you did not understand?)

This question was asked because it was important to ensure that the participants understood the items presented in the questionnaire (NAQWAAQ), especially the questions that were used to determine exposure to workplace bullying (NAQ-R). This was because NAQ-R was designed with a western sample in mind (Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers, 2009). For example, participants based in Asia (that would be where the participants for the actual research would be based) might not understand questions that might contain colloquial terms such as “Sent to Coventry”. If the participants in this pilot study did show signs of not understanding any of the questions, a modification of the questionnaire might be required.

Answers from the participants for Question 2:

*“The content of the questionnaire is fine.”*

*“No.”*

The comments provided assurance that the content of the questionnaire was suitable for this research. This would mean that the questionnaire as it stood would not require any modification.

In question 3, no major concerns emerged with regards to confidentiality. There was a suggestion to separate the collection of personal information and the collection of responses to the questionnaire.

### Question 3

Were there any concerns you might have with the questionnaire or the whole process? (For e.g. issues about confidentiality)

This question was asked to ascertain how important confidentiality was to the participants. This was important since participants were able to terminate their participation in the research.

Answers from the participants for Question 3:

*“Perhaps question around whether there is an approach to separate personal information and questionnaire responses.”*



*“.....did raise my concern about confidentiality. I know the researcher personally,...can't say the same for those who do not know the researcher.”*

The issue of confidentiality had already been addressed as it was presented in the consent form and also at the beginning of the questionnaire that all information collected would be used only for the research and that data collected would be coded and anonymised. Participants were also told about their right of withdrawal from the research (See Appendix 25).

In question 4, only one comment was made on the definition of bullying and the experience of negative acts as asked in the last part of the questionnaire.

#### Question 4

Other comments?

This question was asked to allow the participants to address any other comments or issues that they might want to raise in the course of doing the questionnaire.

Answers from the participants for Question 4:

*“Thank you for including me! You might want to look at the wording at the head of the page. Your definition is of bullying, but then you ask for experience of negative acts.”*

This was a valid point. However, this is the definition set out in the NAQ-R (see below and Appendix 28, the last question, item 23), the purpose of which is to identify whether participants have experienced any negative acts. This is a subjective form of labelling based on the definition set out by Einarsen et al (2009). It must be noted that in the questionnaire used for the pilot study and for the main research, the last part of the questionnaire differs slightly from that of the original NAQ-R. See comparison below.

### **NAQ-R (Appendix 28, the last question, item 23)**

The following paragraph was taken from the original NAQ-R

Have you been bullied at work? We define bullying as a situation where one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions. We will not refer to a one-off incident as bullying. Using the above definition, please state whether you have been bullied at work over the last six months?

- No (continue at question ?) ☐
- Yes, but only rarely ☐
- Yes, now and then ☐
- Yes, several times per week ☐
- Yes, almost daily ☐

## NAQWAAQ (Appendix 29 - Research Questionnaire)

The following was taken from the NAQWAAQ

Some people experience or explain their perspective of bullying in the workplace as:

*a situation where one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions*

Using the above definition, please state below whether you have experienced negative acts at work over the last 6 months.

	No (1)	Yes, but only rarely (2)	Yes, now and then (3)	Yes, several times per week (4)	Yes, almost daily (5)
Have you witnessed such behaviour? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has this happened to you personally? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you done this to others? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The last question (item 23) in NAQWAAQ, like that in the NAQ-R, is also meant to allow participants to self-label their experience. This questionnaire gives participants an opportunity to label their experience as a victim, a witness or a bully. This information is sought since it has been found that bullying has lasting negative effects on victim, witness and bully (Olweus, 2002; Swearer et al, 2010; Sweeting et al, 2006; and Stevens et al, 2004).

### **5.5.3 Summary of the Pilot Study**

From the results obtained in the pilot study, it is clear that the research tool (NAQWAAQ – see Appendix 29) is suitable for use in the collection of actual data. Although the number of participants was low, the concerns raised in the pilot study were satisfactorily addressed. This provides a good assurance that the tool will be able to collect the relevant data on exposure to bullying behaviours (negative acts), psychological flexibility and the self-labelling of bullying experience by the participants. A Chinese version of NAQWAAQ was designed to cater to participants in China so as to provide an option for those who preferred to answer the questionnaire in Chinese. The Chinese version was specifically designed to use only simplified Chinese, which is used predominantly in China, instead of the traditional Chinese that is used in Hong Kong. A professional translator was used to translate the Chinese version. It was then back-translated by a bilingual Chinese professional (English and Chinese) to ensure that the Chinese translations were accurate. The version was vetted by another bilingual individual to ensure that both versions were accurate to the original NAQWAAQ (see Appendix 30). However, this version was not used as there were no participants in China participated in the research.

## 5.6. Overall Summary

As the results obtained in the pilot study were promising, it was decided that in the actual research in this thesis the tools (NAQ-R and WAAQ) will be used. In the following chapter, the methods of the actual research which has two stages, will be delineated:

- Stage 1 - the identification of participants for the research (through organizations and individual participants, the research process which included the administration of the questionnaire (NAQWAAQ) and the scores obtained for the questionnaire.
- Stage 2 - the selection of the sample group (treatment and control groups), the delivery of ACT skills training (treatment group only) and research debrief.

## **CHAPTER 6: Methods**

### **6. Methods**

In this chapter, the discussion will focus on the methods used for the research. This includes the identification of participants and the research process. The first part of the research process is the administration of the NAQWAAQ questionnaire. The second part of the research is the ACT skills training for which two groups were selected. One to go through the training (intervention) and the other to act as a control group (no intervention). The following discussion will provide a step by step process to describe how this research was conducted.

#### **6.1 Research Paradigm**

##### **6.1.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the application of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to help bullied individuals manage their bullying experience. To date, no research in the area of workplace bullying has addressed how individuals can help themselves when they are exposed to bullying. Research has found that ACT has been successful in counteracting symptoms such as depression (Fledderus, Bohlmeijer, Peiterse & Schreurs, 2001; Zettle & Hayes, 1986), post-traumatic disorder (Orsillo & Batten, 2005), and anxiety disorder (Rizert, Forsyth, Sheppard, Boswell, Berghoff & Eifert, 2016). These symptoms are similar to those bullied in the workplace. These have been reported to include post-traumatic stress (Balducci, Alfano & Fraccaroli, 2009), and anxiety and depression (Hogh, Mikkelsen & Hanson, 2011). Therefore the application of ACT is likely to be able to provide bullied individuals a way for them

to deal with their experience. The premise of ACT is to help individuals attain a state of *psychological flexibility*. To achieve this, bullied individuals would have to learn and apply skills that guide them through the six functional processes (acceptance, cognitive defusion, being present, self-as-context, defining valued directions and committed action) embedded within ACT. These processes are introduced as part of skills learning within the intervention through the use of mindfulness exercises and skills training, such as defining values, defusion techniques, physicalizing exercises and setting goals.

### **6.1.2 Functional Contextualism**

The philosophical foundation of ACT is *functional contextualism* (Hayes, 1993). Contextualism is about pragmatism (Stephen Pepper, 1942) and the common sense action within a given context. For example, when bullied individuals are encapsulated within their own bullied experience, they are unlikely to see there is a way out of their experience and this creates a non-workable scenario. This means that individuals need to be mindful of the impact of their experience (able to accept their bullying experience - acceptance and learning to not ruminate about the bullying experience - cognitive defusion) and to be able to stay in the moment to experience the event (being able to realise how ruminating the experience is affecting them - being present). To be in a state of workability, bullied individuals need to adopt a pragmatic view of the truth (perspective taking - self-in context) and it is only in this state that the individuals will be able to manage their bullying experience (focusing on what really matters to them - values) through the goals they set for themselves (workable and achievable goals that can bring them closer to their values - committed actions). When bullied individuals are able to successfully navigate through their

bullying experience using these six processes, they will be deemed to have improved their psychological flexibility state.

### **6.1.3 Psychological Flexibility**

When individuals are being bullied, they can use various approaches to deal with their experience. The EVLN framework (Zapf and Gross, 2001) or problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980) are used by bullied individuals to mitigate bullying in the workplace. Individuals who use these approaches spend their time and energies primarily to stop, interrupt and avoid bullying. All of these strategies only enable individuals to focus on one component of the whole bullying event (to escape the bullying experience) and ignore other components (how they feel, how the bullying is affecting them and to their own career) that could be equally important. On the other hand, if individuals look at their own bullying experience in its entirety, they will adopt an approach of pragmatism that is aligned to their own values. That is instead of focusing on how to eradicate the bullying experience, individuals will be mindful of the impact of their bullying experience on the way they feel, think, perceive and act. By being able to focus on themselves instead of the bullying experience, they are able to see clearly what matters to them most. This increases their psychological flexibility.

### **6.1.4 Mindfulness and Skills Training**

Research has found that bullied individuals are prone to post-traumatic stress and suicide ideation (Balducci, Alfano & Fraccaroli, 2009), anxiety and depression (Hogh, Mikkelsen &



Hansen, 2011), and psychological distress (Nielsen et al, 2012). These symptoms have been successfully circumvented by the application of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to promote psychological flexibility. For example, ACT has been shown to produce promising results in treating anxiety and depressive symptoms (Forman, Herbert, Moitra, Yeomans, & Geller, 2007), social anxiety (Dalrymple & Herbert, 2007), and psychosis (Gaudio & Herbert, 2006).

The introduction of mindfulness exercise and skills (such as defining values, defusion techniques, physicalizing exercises and setting goals) in ACT are helpful for bullied individuals. This is because they help individuals to focus on themselves instead of the bullying experience. When individuals use mindfulness exercises such as breathing or meditation, they are able to concentrate on their breath instead of ruminating about their bullying experience. They are able to experience the present moment (calm) instead of worrying about the past (the bullying experience) and the unknown future (what else would the bully do?). Coupled with learning how to defuse negative thoughts (why me?, it is my fault!) and feelings (worry and fear), bullied individuals can create a psychological distance (perspective taking – self in context) between themselves and their negative thoughts and feelings. This type of psychological distance allows individuals to recognise that their negative thoughts and emotions are detractors that prevent them from achieving their goals and values. When individuals are able to recognise the triggers for their psychological inflexibility (or being stuck in their own negative thoughts and feelings), they can work towards achieving the goals they have set out for themselves.

To test the research paradigm, the methods used need to establish:

- 1) The working phenomenon, that is whether individuals in the workplace do experience bullying.
- 2) How bullying affects the psychological flexibility of bullied individuals.
- 3) What can be done to improve the psychological flexibility of bullied individuals.

For this research, a sequential explanatory design or mixed method (Creswell, Plano, Gutman & Hanson, 2003) was used to gather data. There were two stages to the process: quantitative data was collected first (data collected from a questionnaire sent using Qualtrics, an online software). The questionnaire comprised both the NAQ and WAAQ. The data collected was crucial, as it helped to answer the first hypothesis:

*Individuals who are exposed to bullying will be less psychologically flexible than those who are not exposed to bullying.*

Once bullied individuals were identified to have low psychological flexibility, they were approached to participate in the second part of the research. A total of 10 participants were identified and their names were put in a box. They were then randomly assigned to two groups – one group to receive ACT skills training (intervention group) and one group to receive no training (the control group). Through the use of thematic analysis, the qualitative data collected from the intervention group was analysed. The data was used to answer the second hypothesis:

*The use of ACT intervention on individuals who are exposed to workplace bullying will help them to become more psychologically flexible as compared to those who did not receive*

*any intervention.*

To answer the third hypothesis, quantitative data was collected from both the control group and the intervention group. This helped to determine and further support the findings in the qualitative process.

*Bullied victims who have gone through an ACT intervention will show an increase in their psychological flexibility score as compared to when they did not receive the ACT intervention.*

The use of this mixed method is important in this research because it enables the understanding of the topic in greater depth (Hoover and Krishnamurti, 2010), which in this case the relationship between workplace bullying and psychological flexibility. In addition, this mixed method is able to help answer the broader question of how being psychological flexible can help bullied individuals navigate out from their bullied experience, thus adding insights that otherwise could have been missed (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

The correlation between bullied individuals and their psychological flexibility could only be established through the use of a questionnaire (quantitative data), since there was no previous research. The data was collected from an Asian sample (Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia) with the use of Qualtrics, an online software. To establish how psychological flexibility can indeed help bullied individuals, a comparison between the control group (which did not receive any treatment) and the intervention group (which received 2+1 skills training sessions) was conducted.

To bolster the results obtained in the quantitative part of this research, it was necessary to analyse the qualitative data. Verbatim statements taken from the participants in the intervention group were extracted and were thematically analysed. This data supported the efficacy of the intervention, which enhanced and enriched the overall findings (Taylor and Trumbull, 2005; Mason, 2006) and also provided new knowledge (Stange 2006), that is that intervention can help bullied individuals deal with their bullying experience. In other words, participants who went through the intervention were able to increase their psychological flexibility.

## **6.2 Identification of participants – Organizational Participants and Individual Participants**

The following section delineates the process by which how participants were identified for this research.

### **6.2.1 Why Organizational Participants?**

This researcher decided to approach organizations to invite them to participate in the research because past research has shown that some of the precursors of workplace bullying were related to organizational culture, structure, and practices. For example, Baillie, Notelaers & Matthiesen (2011) found that both avoiding and forcing conflict management style exacerbated bullying in the workplace (5,062 self-reported questionnaire from Flemish organizations). Balducci, Fraccaroli & Schaufeli (2011) in their study, in which 609 participants from a large public administration agency were surveyed to determine whether workplace bullying was related to work characteristics, personality and posttraumatic stress syndrome, reported that work environmental factors such as job demands (workload and job conflict) and resources (decision

authority, co-worker support, salary/promotion prospects) were related to workplace bullying. In another study, the researchers using a convenience sample of 727 employees from nine health care organizations, found that effective organizational initiatives and perceived organizational support had a negative relationship with workplace bullying (Cooper-Thomas, Gardner, O'Driscoll, Catley, Bentley & Trenberth, 2013).

In all these research, the researchers were able to get a considerable number of participants from organizations to participate in their research. Thus, approaching organizations to participate in this research seemed to be an appropriate option.

### **6.2.2 Organizational Participants**

There was a deliberate intention in the main research not to invite participants from any particular industry as it was believed that this would only limit the scope of the investigation. In order to identify and invite participants for this research, it was initially planned to approach various organizations based in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia. Invitation letters were sent to these organizations expressing the purpose of the research and an invitation to them to become involved in the research. These organizations included hospitals (for example, the Matilda Hospital, Hong Kong, and Sengkang Health Singapore), professional bodies (for example, the Law Society, Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong Medical Association), FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) companies (for example, Cold Storage, Singapore and Jebsen & Jebsen, SEA Ltd, Singapore) and trade unions (for example, Cathay Pacific Union and Hong Kong Teachers' Union) (see Appendix 31). Reasons for choosing these industries were:

1. Much research has been done on the healthcare industry (Hogh et al, 2011; Clausen et al, 2012).
2. The legal profession has been reported to be an industry where workplace bullying is rife (Michalek, 2015).
3. The Jardines Group was thought to be an ideal organization to participate in the research because it is a listed company that has a portfolio of diverse leading businesses such as construction, aviation, FMCG and hospitality.

A total of 21 companies were approached through a written invitation to join the research. However, none of the companies responded. The initial intention to invite organizations to participate in the research was not successful. A rethink in approach was necessary. The researcher decided to approach individuals directly for the research.

### **6.2.3 Individual Participants**

Since there was no success in getting organizations to participate in the research, participation was then sought from the researcher's personal and professional networks such as LinkedIn and Facebook. This approach was successful and a total of 50 participants took part in the research. Participants who were identified by the researcher were sent an email with an explanation of the purpose of the research (See Stage 1 – Administration). A link to the questionnaire via Qualtrics, an online survey software was provided for the participants to participate in the research.

## **6.3 Research Process**

In the next section, the discussion will focus on the two stages of the research process:

- Stage 1 - the administration of the questionnaire (NAQWAAQ) through Qualtrics, an online survey software, the participants' breakdown (gender, age, years of experience, industries they worked in, and positions they held), and the breakdown of the scores (obtained by the participants in both sections of the NAQWAAQ).
- Stage 2 – the sample group for the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the research, the ACT skills training ( 3 sessions for the treatment group), the administration of the WAAQ, and the research debrief.

### **6.3.1 Stage 1 - Administration of Questionnaire**

The first stage of the research was to administer the questionnaire (NAQWAAQ) to the participants via Qualtrics, an online survey software. Participants who were identified and agreed to participate in the research were sent an email (see Appendix 32) with a link (this can be found in the References section) for them to access the questionnaire.

The participants were informed that they would be participating in a PhD research that would be focusing on the negative acts people had encountered at work. The deliberate use of the term “negative acts at work” instead of “workplace bullying” was because it was not the intention of the researcher to elicit any form of shame (emotion, experience and affect, Wheeler, 1997) from the participants. Instead, it was meant to only identify whether the participants were exposed to negative acts at work.

The participants were informed that the research comprised two parts: a questionnaire and a practical component. They were told to access the questionnaire using the link below and that, for the second part of the research, they would be informed by email separately if they were chosen to participate. The participants were assured that all data collected for this research would be kept confidential and anonymised. They were also told that should they choose to cease their participation in either part of the research, they could contact the researcher via email. In the letter sent to the participants, they were also informed that the research was approved by the Department of Organizational Psychology Ethics Committee at Birkbeck, University for London. Should they have any concerns with regards to the research, the participants were asked to contact the researcher.

A total of 54 invitations for the questionnaire were sent out and only 50 participants took the questionnaire (4 participants did not return the questionnaire). All participants gave their consent. 26 (52%) were male, 24 (48%) were female. There were 4 age groups: 24-35, 36-45, 46-55, and 56 and above. Participants' years of work experience ranged from 5 months to 38 years and they came from varied industries such as: advertising, management consulting, training and development, information technology, HR consulting, banking and finance, engineering, education, manufacturing, property development, legal services, wholesale, retail, insurance, recruitment, professional, scientific, or technical services, food and beverage, and HR. The participants were classified into two levels: managers/directors and non-managers/directors. Positions held by the participants were varied and they included: Human Resource Director, Group Managing Director, Lecturer, Senior Officer, Talent Partner, Managing Director, Administrator Officer, Teaching Specialist, Regional Product Manager, Apparel Designer, Manager, Senior



Technical Designer, Senior HR Executive, Director of Communications, Assistant Manager, Assistant Professor, Teacher, Partner, Executive Director, Corporate Development Director, VP HR, Managing Director, Consultant, Assistant Portfolio Manager, CEO, Senior Global Benefits Consultant, Actuary, Chief HRO & Company Director, Recruiter, Group Head of Learning and Development, Regional Education Manager, Acquisition Manager, President, New Markets and Business Development, Director of Logistics Quality, Operations, Events Specialist, Principal, Instruction Designer, Assistant OD Manager, and Senior Consultant.

The participants came from: Hong Kong (31, 19 were male, 12 were female), Singapore (14, 4 were male, 10 were female) and Malaysia (5, 3 were male, 2 were female). There were no participants from China.

To identify the participants who were exposed to bullying in the workplace and have low psychological flexibility, the researcher must look at the scores obtained in both parts of the questionnaire (NAQ-R and the WAAQ). The combination of the two questionnaires became NAQWAAQ.

### **6.3.2 NAQ-R – Scores obtained by participants in the first part of the questionnaire (NAQWAAQ)**

Those who were identified to have scored between the cut off points of 33 to 45, and 45 and beyond, were invited to proceed with the second phase of the research. Out of the 50 participants who answered the questionnaire, 5 participants were identified to have been victims of bullying (their scores were above 45), 14 participants were identified to have been occasionally

bullied (their scores were between 33 to 45), and 31 participants were identified as not being bullied (their scores were below 33).

### **6.3.3 WAAQ – Scores obtained by participants in the second part of the questionnaire (NAQWAAQ)**

In the scoring for WAAQ as suggested by Professor Bond, there is no cut-off point to indicate psychological inflexibility. To classify whether an individual as psychological flexible or inflexible, the degree of relationship and outcomes needs to be considered to get a holistic and complete guide. That is to say, in this research context, if an individual had a psychological flexibility score that corresponded with a score that depicted an exposure to workplace bullying (that is scores between 33 to 45 or 45 and above), the individual was considered to be psychologically inflexible. Such a relationship was prevalent from the scores obtained. 14 participants were found to be psychological inflexible and they had scores that were 33 and below. They could be classified into two groups: 4 were identified to have bullying scores above 45 and with psychological flexibility scores ranged from 13 to 33; and 10 were identified to have bullying scores between 33 and 45 and with psychological flexibility scores ranged from 20 to 33.

### **6.3.4 NAQWAAQ**

A total of 14 participants were identified and they were all approached to participate in the second phase of the research. However, two of the participants decided not to participate in this second stage of the study. Two other participants were not contactable. The number of participants left to proceed to the next stage was ten.

### **6.3.5 Stage 2 - Sample Group for Second Phase of the Research**

The names of the 10 participants who were identified to have been bullied and have low psychological flexibility were put in a box. The participants were randomly assigned into 2 groups – one group to receive ACT skills training (3 from Hong Kong, 1 from Singapore and 1 from Malaysia) and the other to be a control group (3 from Hong Kong, 1 from Singapore and 1 from Malaysia).

The group selected for ACT skills training was asked to give their consent to participate in this part of the research which consisted of three sessions. They were asked to sign a consent form in the first training session. The first and second training sessions were conducted in consecutive weeks in which the participants were taught skills to help them to be psychologically flexible. The skills included: mindfulness exercises, identifying values and values-based actions, defusion techniques to help them to learn psychological acceptance, create psychological distance and perspective taking. All these skills were closely related to the six processes (acceptance, cognitive defusion, being present, self-as context, values and committed actions) of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. The third session was conducted one month after the second session. In the third session, a questionnaire (WAAQ) was administered, and a short interview was conducted and recorded. All participants were told that they could withdraw from the research at any time and that their information and data would be used strictly for the research and would be anonymised. Those who were allocated to the control group were informed that they would be asked at a later date to fill in a questionnaire and similarly they were also told that should they decide to withdraw from the research at any time, they would be able to do so. They were also informed that any data collected would be used for the research only and would be anonymized.

All participants in the control group were sent the questionnaire and were asked to return to the researcher via email. All 5 questionnaires were received.

### **6.3.6 Stage 2 - ACT Skills Training (For the Treatment Group)**

The purpose of the ACT skills training was to help individuals to become psychologically flexible. That was to accept negative thoughts and emotions due to their exposure to workplace bullying and work towards values driven actions.

### **6.3.7 Delivery Method**

The method of delivery for the ACT training was a 2 + 1 model (See Appendix 33 for the procedures) as suggested by Bond & Bunce (2000) and Flaxman & Bond (2006, 2010b). Participants were required to attend 3 training sessions. The first and second sessions were conducted consecutively, and a third booster session occurred one or three months after session two. The training process and materials (See Appendices 33 to 45, Handouts 1 to 8) were adopted from *The Mindful and Effective Employee - An Acceptance & Commitment Therapy Training Manual for Improving Well-Being and Performance* by Flaxman et al (2013). One material (a set of values cards) was taken from the study by Hayes & Ciarrochi, 2015 - See Appendix 35). Flaxman et al (2013) suggested (pp 49-50), that a trainer needs to have some educational background in psychology or a related behavioural science profession, such as mental health promotion, psychiatric nursing, social work, vocational rehabilitation, counselling, or psychotherapy. They also suggested that a trainer needs to have attended a number of experiential ACT workshops to develop an expertise to use the approach for training. This researcher has

fulfilled these requirements as he is a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society and a registered Industrial-Organizational Psychologist with the Hong Kong Psychological Society who has incorporated ACT in his consulting work. He has also attended both an online ACT advanced course with Dr Russ Harris, 2016 and a 2-day workshop on ACT as a Brief Intervention with Dr Kirk Strosahl and Dr Patricia Robinson in London, 2015.

#### **6.3.7.1 Session One**

In session one, participants were informed that they would have to attend three sessions of psychological and behavioural skills training. They were told that research had shown that this type of training could help in their psychological wellbeing and would increase their behavioural effectiveness. They were also told that it was important to practise the skills they would be learning in between the sessions as the practice was part of the training. They were given a series of exercises to help them in their skills training. The sessions were conducted in Hong Kong and Singapore to accommodate the participants. They were asked to sign a consent form to acknowledge and agree that they would participate in this part of the research. They were told that all information collected in the sessions would be used predominantly for the research and that they would be anonymised. They were also told that they could at any time withdraw from the research if they chose to do so.

### **6.3.7.2 The Components of the Skills Training**

All participants were briefed on the components of the skills training. With the use of a Two Skills diagram (see Appendix 34), they were briefed about the relationship between mindfulness skills training and values-based actions.

The participants were told that both mindfulness and values-based actions worked together. They were told that in the three sessions they would learn mindfulness exercises and would be putting them into practice as part of their home assignments. They were also told that after each session they would be given home assignments to be completed before the next session.

### **6.3.7.3 Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 mins)**

To create awareness, mindfulness exercises such as the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise or the Raisin Exercise can be used. For this research, the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise. In this exercise, the participants were asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture”*

The participants were asked to close their eyes. They were asked to breathe in through their nose and exhale out from their mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth.”*

The participants were then asked to pay attention to any sensations in their toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). They were then asked to focus their attention to any sensations or temperature change in their hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations in your toes and feet” (2 minutes)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change in your hands and fingers.” (2 minutes)*

The participants were asked to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and to lose awareness of their current physical sensations. The participants were asked to come back to the sensations when they had drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel; when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations.” (2 minutes)*

Next, the participants were asked to put their focus on their abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the abdomen with each breath they took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen; with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your abdomen.” (2 minutes)*

The participants were then asked to focus on their whole body and to feel the sensations throughout their body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body.”*  
(2 minutes)

Lastly, the participants were asked to open their eyes and come back to the room in their own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room.”*

*“Share with me your experience.”*

After the participants had shared their experience, a debrief was done.

#### **6.3.7.4 Debrief**

When the participants had completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participants were asked what they had noticed during the exercise. Once they had shared their experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and to lose awareness of the present. It was reiterated that the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

#### **6.3.7.5 Values and Values-Driven Actions**

In this part, participants learned about what values were and how they were important in helping them guide their daily behaviours. The participants were asked what values meant to them.

*“What do values mean to you?”*



All participants tended to mix up goals and values. It was reiterated to participants that goals were achievable and had a completion date whereas values would guide their daily behaviours. Participants were also asked what they would consider as internal or external barriers that would prevent them from achieving their goals and values.

*“What would you consider as internal and external barriers that would prevent you from achieving your goals and values?”*

#### **6.3.7.6 Compass Metaphor – Goals and Values**

To reiterate the difference between goals and values, the Compass Metaphor (Hayes et al, 1999, see Appendix 36) was used. The participants were asked to choose a direction from the compass (that was to signify the values). Once participants have chosen the direction for their values, they were asked to identify landmarks (short term goals) along the road to their chosen direction. The participants were then asked to identify the next destination (long term goals). The participants were then asked what immediate steps they would take to walk towards their chosen directions.

*“Look at the compass and choose a direction, that will signify your values.”*

*“Next please identify any landmarks along the road to your chosen direction, these will be your short-term goals.”*

*“Please identify the next destination along the road to your chosen direction, this represents your long-term goals.”*

*“What immediate steps would you take to walk in your chosen direction, this represents your values-based actions”*

*“Share with me your experience.”*

After the participants had shared their experience, a debrief was done.

#### **6.3.7.7 Debrief**

Participants were told that values based actions allowed them to be aware of their values, their sense of purpose, life direction and meaning. Values-based actions reinforced values as a powerful guide to life goals and actions. Participants were told that these actions would help to enforce values as an inner compass to help them navigate through challenging times and would guide them to make important decisions. It was reiterated to the participants that actions which were guided by their values were unlikely to be influenced by unhelpful thoughts, feelings, moods, and behavioural habits.

#### **6.3.7.8 Value Cards**

Participants were then presented with values cards which consisted of 4 sections: caring for myself; connecting with other; challenging myself, valuing in the presence of difficulty (See Appendix 35). These sections each have 8 values. Participants were instructed to choose as many values that they wanted from the values cards, and to group them into 3 categories: least important,

moderately important, and most important. From the most important category, they were to choose their top 5 values.

*“Please look at these values cards, they are categorised as follows: caring for myself, connecting with others, challenging myself, valuing in the presence of difficulty. In each of the category there are 8 different values. You can choose as many values as you want from any of the categories.”*

*“Once you have chosen the values, please put them into the following 3 categories: least important, moderately important and most important.”*

*“When you have categorised the values accordingly, please choose the top 5 values from the most important category.”*

The participants were given Handout 1 (See Appendix 37). In the handout, participants were presented with 5 Values (Life) Areas: Your Health Values, Your Relationship Values, Your Work and Career Values, Your Leisure Time Values, and Your Personal Growth Values. Participants were told to choose 1 Value Area from the 5. They were then asked to choose which of the 5 important values they had chosen from the values cards apply to their chosen Value Area. They were then asked to write a value statement and about 3 to 5 value reminder words for their chosen value (see Handout 1). After that they were asked to fill in Handout 2 (See Appendix 38) where they were required to indicate which Values (Life) Areas they had chosen, their value reminder words, their short, medium and long term goals and their values- based actions. They were also required to write down any internal barriers that might prevent them from fulfilling their values goals and actions. They were instructed to do the home practices (a mindfulness exercise

and values-based actions) as set out in Handout 3 (see Appendix 39) between session one and session two. The one week gap between sessions one and two allowed participants to practise the mindfulness exercise and values-based actions (p44, Flaxman, Bond & Liveheim, 2013).

#### Handout 1

*“Please choose which Value Area you would like to work on for the coming week.”*

*“Decide which of your top 5 values you would like to work on for the coming week.”*

*“Based on the value you have chosen for the Value Area, please write down a value statement and about 3 to 5 reminder words for that chosen value.”*

#### Handout 2

*“Under the Value column, please indicate the Value Area and the Value you will be working on for the coming week.”*

*“Please also write down the reminder words for the chosen value.”*

*“Under the Goals column, please write down the short term goals, medium term goals and long term goals.”*

*“Under the Actions column, please write the 3 values-based actions that you will be working on for the coming week”*

Before receiving briefing about the Home Practices, the participants were reminded about the Two Skills Diagram (Appendix 34). The participants were also introduced to a Two Sheets of Paper Technique (see Appendix 40). One of sheets had the word “VALUE” and the other had the words “UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS”. The purpose of showing the two papers to the participants was to reiterate that the training that they had gone through was intended to help them work towards their values despite their unhelpful thoughts, moods, and feelings. The point was to accept the unhelpful thoughts, moods and feelings in the background and work towards their values.

*“You will see before you two sheets of paper. One with the word VALUES and the other with the words UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS, AND FEELINGS. The purpose of the training you have gone through was to help you work towards your values [while saying this, the values sheet of paper was moved slightly to the front while the other sheet of paper was moved slightly behind] and to accept the unhelpful thoughts, moods and feelings in the background.”*

After the participants were presented with the Two Sheets of Paper Techniques, they were briefed on Home Practices 1 and 2.

#### **6.3.7.9 Home Practices 1 and 2**

For Home Practice 1, the participants were asked to engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that they would be performing over the following week. They were encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies, such as post-it stickers, noting task on their calendar, or setting a reminder on their mobile phones. They were encouraged to notice what happen when they

performed the chosen actions. They were required to write down any thoughts and feelings that would show up before, during and after they had performed each action. They were also asked to take notice of how others responded and any consequences of their actions. The participants were told that it was important that they completed the home practices they had been tasked to do. They were told that the home practices would be reviewed in the next session.

### Home Practice 1

*“For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice.”*

*“Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions.”*

*“Do take notice of how others respond to your actions and also whether there are any consequences to your actions.”*

For Home Practice 2, the participants were asked to take about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. They were asked to record any observations and comments.

### Home Practice 2

*“For home practice 2, please spend about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. You can use the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise for this practice.”*

Once the instructions for the home practices were explained, the first session ended with the participants and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session. A total of 1 hour and 30 minutes were used in the first session. The second session was conducted on the following week.

#### **6.3.7.10 Session Two**

In this session, the researcher reviewed the participants' home practices and the participants continued to learn skills to help them work towards their values. The skills were taught using five exercises: Monsters in the Bus (see Appendix 41), Defusion Technique, Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion and Physicalizing Exercise, to help the participants learn psychological acceptance and perspective thinking. Prior to them learning the skills, the participants' home practices were reviewed. The researcher started Session two with the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise with the participants. The purpose of this exercise was to create awareness and mindfulness.

#### **6.3.7.11 Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 minutes)**

In this exercise, the participants were asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.”*

The participants were asked to close their eyes. They were asked to breathe in through their nose and exhale out from their mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth.”*

The participants were then asked to pay attention to any sensations in their toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). They were then asked to move their attention to any sensations or temperature change in their hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations in your toes and feet.”* (2 minutes)

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change in your hands and fingers.”* (2 minutes)

The participants were asked to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. The participants were asked to come back to the sensations when they had drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations”*  
(2 minutes)

Next, the participants were asked to put their focus on their abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the abdomen with each breath they took.



*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your abdomen” (2 minutes)*

The participants were then asked to focus on their whole body and to feel the sensations throughout their body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body” (2 minutes)*

Lastly, the participants were asked to open their eyes and come back to the room in their own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room”*

*“Share with me your experience.”*

After the participants had shared their experience, a debrief was done.

#### **6.3.7.12 Debrief**

When the participants had completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participants were asked what they noticed during the exercise. Once they had shared their experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. It was reiterated that the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

### **6.3.7.13 Reviewing of Home Practices**

The purpose of reviewing the home practice was to enable the researcher to determine whether participants had applied the skills they had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries pertaining to the home practices, skills learned and to reinforce the concepts of values and values-based actions.

#### **Home Practice 1 – Values-Based Actions**

Using the Two Skills Diagram (see Appendix 34), the participants were reminded about the relationship between mindfulness and values-based actions. The researchers checked with the participants which values-based actions they had performed, and what they had noticed before, during and after they had performed those actions. The participants were also asked to share what values-based actions they did not perform. They were also encouraged to share the internal and external barriers that had prevented them from performing their values-based actions.

*“Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values-based actions.”*

*“Please share with me what were the values-based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?”*

*“Were there any values-based actions that you did not perform?”*

*“What were the internal and external barriers that have prevented you from performing the values-based actions?”*

After the participants had completed their sharing and the Home Practice 1 had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to review the Home Practice 2.

### **Home Practice 2 – Mindfulness Exercise**

Participants were asked about their experience with regards to the mindfulness exercises, how much time they had spent each day on the mindfulness exercises, their observations and comments.

*“Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercises.”*

*“How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?”*

*“What were your observations?”*

When the participants had finished sharing and the Home Practice 2 had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to the next stage of the session – Skills Learning.

#### **6.3.7.14 Skills Learning**

After both Home Practice 1 and 2 had been reviewed, the skills learning session commenced. The participants were told that they would be learning skills of psychological acceptance, defusion techniques and perspective taking. The skills were to be taught using five different exercises and they were: Exercise 1 - Monsters (Passengers) in the Bus (see Appendix 41), Exercise 2 - Defusion Technique, Exercise 3 - Cartoon Voice Technique, Exercise 4 - Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion (Harris 2009), and Exercise 5 - Physicalizing Exercise.

#### **6.3.7.15 Exercise 1 - Monsters (Passengers) in the Bus**

The purpose of this exercise was to teach the participants about psychological acceptance. The participants were shown a picture with monsters (passengers) in the bus. The participants were told that they were the driver of the Bus of Life and the monsters (passengers) on the bus represented their thoughts, feelings, moods, and urges. The participants were told that as the driver, their chosen direction was to go towards their chosen values and the passengers were there to distract him from going towards their values. Participants were asked what they would do in such a situation.

*“This is a picture we call monsters in the bus. You are the driver of this Bus of Life and the monsters represent your thoughts, feelings, moods, and urges. As the driver, you have a chosen direction to go towards your values but the monsters are here to distract you from going towards your values. What would you do in this situation?”*

After the participants had shared their answers, a debrief was done.

#### **6.3.7.16 Debrief**

The researcher explained to the participants that trying to get rid of the passengers would be futile. The passengers would always try to distract and influence their actions. Therefore, the participants would have to be aware of the presence of the passengers but continue to proceed to move towards their values. The participants then moved to the next exercise where they learned the technique of defusion.

#### **6.3.7.17 Exercise 2 - Defusion Technique**

The purpose of this skill (defusion technique) is to help participants become aware of the unhelpful thoughts, emotions, and moods that they will experience and that they will not to be entangled by them. The researcher highlighted the reasons for untangling oneself from thoughts, emotions, and moods. The researcher explained to the participants: 1) how internal barriers (thoughts, emotions, and moods) could cripple their well-being; 2) how the mind in the course of trying to protect them would end up being unhelpful as it would start to judge them; and 3) how when they were too caught up with their mind's output would miss experiencing the present (this was to enforce mindfulness). The participants were then asked to write down unhelpful thoughts that had prevented them from pursuing their values based actions or goals on Handout 4 (see Appendix 42).

*“Often, we get caught up with our thoughts, emotions, and moods and when we spend too much time on them, we tend to lose out on the experience of the present.”*

*“Our mind will constantly be trying to help us by making us ruminate but that can be unhelpful as the mind will then start to judge us.”*

*“Please use Handout 4 and write down some of the unhelpful thoughts that have prevented you from pursuing your values-based actions or goals”*

After the participants had completed Handout 4, a debrief was done.

#### **6.3.7.18 Debrief**

Once the participants had identified their unhelpful thoughts, the researcher reiterated the point that the purpose was to be aware of those unhelpful thoughts, emotions, and moods but not to attempt to get rid of them. The participants moved next to the next exercise where they learned how to hear their negative thoughts through the voice of a cartoon character.

#### **6.3.7.19 Exercise 3 – Cartoon Voice Technique**

The purpose of using this technique is to create an awareness that negative thoughts, emotions, and moods are simply language (p 60, Harris, 2008) and thus that they should not take them too seriously. Using a cartoon voice and repeating negative thoughts, emotions and moods, participants are able to hear them in a different voice and thereby lessen their impact.

The participants were asked to take one of the unhelpful thoughts that they had labelled in Handout 4 and focus on the impact of that unhelpful thought. They were then asked to choose a cartoon voice. The participants were then asked to hear the unhelpful thought through the voice of the cartoon voice they had chosen. They were then asked to look at the unhelpful thought and notice any impact. The participants were asked to share their experience of hearing their negative thought using a cartoon voice. Once the participants had shared their experience, the participants were debriefed. The researcher reiterated the importance of being aware of their negative thoughts and stressed that those thoughts were merely words which were not to be taken too seriously.

*“From the negative thoughts you have identified earlier, focus on one of them and its impact.”*

*“Next please choose a cartoon character you like and hear that negative thought through the voice of the cartoon character.”*

*“Focus on the negative thought and notice any impact.”*

*“Share with me your experience about hearing the negative thought through the voice of the cartoon voice.”*

*“The purpose of this technique is to help you to recognise and be aware of negative thoughts and that they are merely words, not to be taken too seriously.”*

After the participants had shared their experience, a debrief was done.

#### **6.3.7.20 Debrief**

Participants were taught how to use a cartoon voice to repeat the unhelpful thoughts they had. The purpose of using the cartoon voice was to let the participants realise that the unhelpful thoughts, emotions, or moods were just a facet of language. Repeating unhelpful thoughts, emotions, and moods in a cartoon voice, made them lose their impact. The participants next learned how to defuse their negative thoughts in the following exercise.

#### **6.3.7.21 Exercise 4 – Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion (Harris, 2009)**

This exercise was used to demonstrate fusion and defusion and to help participants to be aware and to be able to watch their thoughts. The participants were asked to write down an unhelpful thought as big as possible to cover a piece of paper. Once they had done so, they were asked to hold the paper tightly and to hold it up touching their nose. The participants were asked to look past the paper (their unhelpful thought) at their surroundings. The participants were asked to describe the experience. They were then asked to move the paper slightly away from their nose and to hold the paper less tightly. The participants were asked to describe any difference between the two perspectives. They should have replied that now they could see the unhelpful thought and their surroundings. Next the participants were asked to fully stretch out their arms still holding the paper and hold it till their arms ached. Once they were no longer able to hold up the paper, they were asked to put the paper down on their lap. The participants were then asked about their experience.



*“Please think of an unhelpful thought and write it as big as possible to cover the piece of paper.”*

*“Please hold up the paper and place it touching your nose and then look past the paper at your surroundings.”*

*“Now move the paper slightly away from your nose and tell me what do you see?”*

*“Still holding your paper, stretch your arm fully. Once you feel that your arms are aching, put your arms down and place them on your lap.”*

*“Share with me your experience about this exercise.”*

Once the participants had shared their experience, a debrief was done.

#### **6.3.7.22 Debrief**

The participants were told that it was important to be aware of unhelpful thoughts but to be mindful not to spend too much time on these thoughts, as this would result in them missing out on things that were happening around them (when they put the paper touching their nose). They would thus not be able to be in the moment. They would begin to see their surroundings and notice their thoughts when they put the paper slightly away from their nose (this was to create a healthy psychological distance from the unhealthy thoughts). They would learn to accept and be aware of the unhelpful thoughts but not actively to try to fight them when they put the paper down on their lap. This move was meant to allow the participants to experience unhelpful thoughts and be present at the moment, that is to defuse from their unhelpful thoughts. (Hayes et al, 1999; Harris, 2009).

In the last exercise, participants learned how to physicalize their negative thoughts and learned the skill of emotional acceptance.

#### **6.3.7.23 Exercise 5 - Physicalizing Exercise**

The purpose of teaching the participants this physicalizing exercise is to cultivate emotional acceptance skills. Similar to the defusion exercise taught before, this exercise was meant to help the participants to create a psychological distance between themselves and their emotions, moods, and thoughts. The exercise sought to encourage the participants to open up about an uncomfortable emotion and to notice the impact of the emotion as physical sensations that were experienced throughout their body. The participants were asked to objectify the feeling/sensation they experienced as an object out of their body. They were then asked to welcome the objectified feeling back to their body, as a form of acceptance of that feeling. After the participants completed the exercise, they were asked to share their experience.

*“Please close your eyes and notice your body sensations and feeling as you breathe in and out. Focus on the sensations in your toes, hands, abdomen and the whole body. When your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back and notice the sensations.”*

*“Now I would like you to think of a stressful event, situation or a person and think on it for a few minutes. While you are doing this, be aware of any changes taking place in your body, for example feelings or physical reaction.”*

*“Identify where the feeling or physical reaction is and then draw an imaginary line across the feeling. Be curious about this feeling as if it is the first time you are encountering it.”*

*“Please imagine the feeling as a physical object and that it has now popped out of your body.”*

*“The feeling is now outside your body, look at the feeling and now give it a shape. Next give it a colour. Then give it a weight.”*

*“Now take a step back and look at this object.”*

*“Next welcome the object back to your body. Notice where the object has settled and draw an imaginary line across it.”*

*“Carry on focusing on your breathing. Turn your awareness now to your abdomen and then your whole body. Taking your last breath in and out, when you are ready, return to the room and open your eyes.”*

*“Share with me your experience about this exercise.”*

#### **6.3.7.24 Debrief**

The participants were asked to share their experience in this physicalizing exercise. They were asked what the feeling that they have chosen was and the form it took as an object, its shape and weight. It was reiterated that it was important to be able to notice feeling or emotion for what it actually was and where it could reside in the body. The purpose of objectifying the feeling or emotion and popping it out of the body was intended to create a healthy psychological distance between the person and his/her feeling and emotions. To reinforce psychological distance, the researcher did a quick “hands as emotions” exercise. Together with the participants, the researcher

used his hands as emotions and covered his eyes. This was to indicate that as a person was embroiled in his or her feelings and emotions, he or she would find it difficult to look beyond them. But by moving the hands slightly away, this would create a psychological distance that in turn would provide a mindful perspective of those feelings and emotions.

After the participants had learned the three skills of psychological acceptance, defusion techniques and perspective taking, they were briefed about Home Practices 1, 2 and 3.

#### **6.3.7.25 Home Practices 1, 2 and 3 (Handout 6 – Appendix 43)**

For Home Practice 1, the participants were asked to engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that they would be performing over the following week. They were encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies. They were encouraged to notice what happened when they performed the chosen actions. They were required to write down any thoughts and feelings that would show up before, during and after they had performed each action. They were also asked to take notice of how others responded and any consequences of their actions.

*“For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice.”*

*“Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions.”*

*“Do take notice of how others respond to your actions and also whether there are any consequences to your actions.”*

For Home Practice 2, the participants were asked to achieve four values-based goals before Session 3. They were asked to focus on their short term goals.

*“For home practice 2, please look at the four short term goals you have recorded in Session 2. Please achieve these goals. Stay present and notice what happens as you pursue these goals.”*

For Home Practice 3, the participants were asked to take about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. They were asked to record any observations and comments.

*“For home practice 3, please spend about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. You can use the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise for this practice. You will be given 4 copies to record your practice.”*

The participants were also given Handout 6 (See Appendix 43). This handout was meant to help participants, if they preferred, to visualize their behavioural process. The squiggly line diagonally up the centre of the page signified that to achieve a values-based direction, the process to be followed would be filled with twists and turns. The rectangular boxes were used for values-based actions and the empty scrolls represented the values-based goals the participants would like to achieve.

Once the instructions for the home practices had been explained, the second session ended with the participant and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session. The next session was scheduled to take place one month later.

### **Why was there a gap between session two and three?**

The gap between session two and three was one month instead of three months as originally planned. There were two reasons for keeping the gap between sessions two and three short. One was the availability of the participants and the second was that research has found that a lengthier period of time has little impact on overall improvements in mental health, behavioural functioning, and psychological flexibility (p 44, Flaxman et al, 2013). This research also found that shorter training sessions coupled with handouts and suggested reading had beneficial effects. These researchers used a maximum of 3 hours in their training sessions, inclusive of breaks and the completion of any evaluation measures (p 44). As was suggested by Flaxman et al, to have shorter training sessions over four or more weeks allow participants and trainers to reflect on progress on a weekly basis (p 45). This format enables participants to complete, and researchers to review home practices; and to introduce new skills to be practised, discussed, and reinforced between sessions. For this thesis research, one hour and thirty minutes were allocated for each session to include review of home practices, discussion, and the introduction of new skills.

### **6.3.7.26 Session Three**

In session three, participants' home practices for the whole month were reviewed. The researcher reviewed the mindfulness exercises and values-based actions. In doing so, the researcher was able to see whether participants had used the skills they had learned and had progressed in their values-based actions. Similarly, queries were clarified and concepts were reinforced.

In this session, participants were asked to answer only the WAAQ questionnaire. This was in order to determine whether participants' psychological flexibility scores had changed after the training sessions. In addition, the researcher conducted a short interview to understand how participants viewed the whole skills training process. To encourage them to carry on practising the new acquired skills, participants were presented with home practices for further practice (Handouts 7 and 8 – see Appendices 44 and 45). To start this session, participants were led to do a shorter version of the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes). This was to create awareness and mindfulness.

### **6.3.7.27 Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes)**

In this exercise, the participants were asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.”*

The participants were asked to close their eyes. They were asked to breathe in through their nose and exhale out from their mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth.”*

The participants were then asked to pay attention to any sensations in their toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). They were then asked to move their attention to any sensations or temperature change in their hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations in your toes and feet.”* (1 minute)

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change in your hands and fingers.”* (1 minute)

The participants were asked to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. The participants were asked to come back to the sensations when they had drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations.”*  
(1 minute)

Next the participants were asked to put their focus on their abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the abdomen with each breath they took.



*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your abdomen.” (1 minute)*

The participants were then asked to focus on their whole body and to feel the sensations throughout their body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body.” (1 minute)*

Lastly, the participants were asked to open their eyes and come back to the room in their own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room.”*

*“Share with me your experience.”*

After the participants had shared their experience, a debrief was done.

#### **6.3.7.28 Debrief**

When the participants had completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participants were asked what they noticed during the exercise. Once they had shared their experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. It was reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

### **6.3.7.29 Review of Home Practices**

The purpose of reviewing the home practice was to enable the researcher to determine whether participants had applied the skills they had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries pertaining to the home practices, skills learned and reinforce the concepts of values and values-based actions.

#### **Home Practice 1 – Values Based Actions**

Using the Two Skills Diagram (see Appendix 34), the relationship between mindfulness and values-based actions was reiterated to the participants. The researcher checked with the participants which values-based actions they had performed, what they had noticed before, during and after they had performed the actions. They were asked to share what values-based actions they have not performed. The participants were also asked to share internal and external barriers that prevented them performing their values-based actions.

*“Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values based actions.”*

*“Please share with me what were values-based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?”*

*“Were there any value-based actions that you did not perform?”*

*“What were the internal and external barriers that prevented you from performing the values-based actions?”*

After the participants had completed their sharing and the Home Practice 1 had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to review the Home Practice 2.

### **Home Practice 2 – Four Value-Based Goals**

Participants were asked whether they had achieved performing the four value-based goals. They were asked to share what they had noticed when they pursued the goals.

*“I would like to check whether you did achieve the four values-based goals?”*

*“What did you notice when you were pursuing the goals?”*

After the participants had completed their sharing and the Home Practice d had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to review the Home Practice 3.

### **Home Practice 3 – Mindfulness Exercise**

Participants were asked about their experience with regards to the mindfulness exercises, how much time they had spent each day for the mindfulness exercise, their observations, and comments.

*“Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercises.”*

*“How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?”*

*“What were your observations?”*

When the participants had finished sharing and the Home Practice 3 had been reviewed. The researcher proceeded to the next stage of the session – **Values Consistency Exercise**.

#### **6.3.7.30 Values Consistency Exercise – Handout 7 (see Appendix 44)**

After reviewing the home practices, the participants were asked to fill in Handout 7. The purpose of doing this was to see whether how value consistent the participants had been for the past 1 month.

After they had completed filling up Handout 7, the researcher went through the information with the participants. The researcher asked the participants about the areas which they felt were not consistent with their values, and their reasons for that. This allowed the researcher to reinforce the concepts and skills learned in previous sessions.

*“Thank you for filling up Handout 7, let us go through the handout.”*

*“There were some areas you have marked not consistent with your values. Could you share with me why this is so?”*

After the participants had completed Handout 7, the researcher proceeded to administer the WAAQ.

#### **6.3.7.31 WAAQ (see pages 8 and 9 of Appendix 29)**

As stated, the purpose of asking the participants to fill this questionnaire was to see whether their psychological flexibility had changed after the skills learning sessions and home practices. The participants were asked to answer the 7 questions in the questionnaire – WAAQ.

*“I would like to ask you 7 statements and please answer them as truthfully as you can.”*

*“Statement 1 – I am able to work effectively in spite of any personal worries that I have. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 2 – I can admit to my mistakes at work and still be successful.*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 3 – I can still work very effectively even if I am nervous about something.*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 4 – Worries do not get in the way of my success. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 5 – I can perform as required no matter how I feel. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 6 – I can work effectively even when I doubt myself. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 7 – My thoughts and feelings do not get in the way of my work. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

After the participants had completed the 7 statements, they were asked how the processes had helped them with regards to negative thoughts and emotions.

*“Please share with me how the processes have helped you with regards to negative thoughts and emotions.”*

Once the participants had shared their experiences, the researcher did a research debrief.

#### **6.3.7.32 Research Debrief**

The research debrief was intended to let the participants know the purpose of the skills training sessions and how the skills could help those who had been exposed to workplace bullying.

The researcher explained the strategies used by victims of workplace bullying and how they could only be useful to a certain extent. For example, when victims were not able to seek redress, they could resort to counterproductive behaviours such as retaliation or being absent from work. If the strategies used were unsuccessful, victims might choose to leave. However, while leaving can help victims to stop bullying, victims continue to carry with them the emotional baggage of that experience, which can affect their psychological well-being. This could include rumination of the bullying experience and self-blame. In the workplace bullying literature, to date, there is no research focusing on how individuals can help themselves when they are being bullied (self-intervention).

The skills training sessions formed part of the self-intervention. The skills learned from the sessions cover the six core processes of the therapy Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. A brief explanation of the six processes were explained to the participants. The researcher then linked the skills learned to the bullying experiences the participants had gone through. This was done to allow the participants to see how the skills could be used to help them in managing the negative thoughts and emotions they might have felt or continued to be feeling due to their exposure to bullying.

*“Thank you for participating in all the sessions. I would like to take this opportunity to explain to you the purpose of my research.”*

*“As you know, workplace bullying is unavoidable and often people will use various ways to counteract it. These could be direct or indirect ways. For example, an individual can choose to resort to behaving counterproductively, such as by retaliation or by being absent*

*from work. However, when these strategies do not work, an individual may choose to leave the organisation. Although these strategies do provide a resolution for an individual, he or she would leave the organization carrying the baggage of the bullying experience and this can often impact on their psychological well-being. That is, the individual could spend time ruminating about their bullying experience and blame himself or herself for what had happened.”*

*“Workplace bullying research to date has not address what bullied individuals could do to help themselves (self-intervention).”*

*“That is why the main focus of this research is to find a way to help bullied individuals.”*

*“The skills training sessions are part of the six processes of the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. The six processes are: acceptance, cognitive defusion, self as context, present, values and committed actions. The six processes enable an individual to become psychologically flexible, that is not to get stuck in negative thoughts, emotions, or moods, but instead to look at what matters to him or her (values) and to spend time working towards that.”*

*“The mindfulness exercise allows us to be aware of our surroundings, how we can be affected physically and physiologically when we are caught up with negative thoughts, emotions, and moods.” (Self-Awareness)*

*“Monsters in the Bus, Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Defusion/Fusion Exercise and Physicalizing Exercise help an individual to accept and defuse negative thoughts, emotions, and moods. In using these, an individual will learn to create a psychological distance between himself and herself and the negative thoughts, emotions and moods. (self-as-context, a form of perspective taking)*



*“Home practices of stating values and values-based actions encourage individuals to use the skills of acceptance, defusion and perspective taking to work towards their values-based goals.”*

*“When applying these skills in the context of workplace bullying, an individual will learn not to let the bullying experience deter him or her from working towards his or her important values. So instead of trying hard to fight the bullying or the emotions, the individual will focus on what are the best ways to counteract the bullying (values-based action) and not let negative thoughts, emotions and moods derail him or her from the values.”*

Once the research debrief had been completed, the researcher encouraged the participants to continue the home practices. The participants were given Handout 8 (see Appendix 45). The participants were told to follow the previous instructions that were given for the home practices if they decided to carry on.

*“Thank you once again for participating in this research. I would like to give you Handout 8. Although your participation in this research has ended, I would encourage you to carry on doing the home practices that are contained in Handout 8. You can use the previous instructions to help you continue your home practices.”*

To conclude the session, the participants were thanked again for their participation. They were assured that all data collected would only be used for this research and would be anonymised. They were told that should they decide not to have their data used for this research, they would need to contact the researcher

## **CHAPTER 7 : Results And Analysis**

### **7. Results and Analysis**

In this chapter, the discussion will focus on the results of the research conducted for this thesis. An analysis of the results will be presented. Three studies were conducted.

#### **Study 1 – Psychological Flexibility and Workplace Bullying**

The first study, in which participants were sent the NAQWAAQ questionnaire, sought to test the first hypothesis. That was to determine whether those who were exposed to bullying would show low psychological flexibility.

The first hypothesis:

*Individuals who are exposed to bullying will be less psychologically flexible than those who are not exposed to bullying.*

#### **Study 2 – Impact of Intervention and Non-Intervention**

The purpose of the second study was to determine whether those who had gone through the intervention (ACT skills training) would show an increase of their psychological flexibility. This was to test out the second hypothesis

The second hypothesis:

*The use of ACT intervention on individuals who are exposed to workplace bullying will help them to become more psychologically flexible as compared to those who did not receive any intervention..*

To test this hypothesis, the post scores of both the control group (no intervention) and the intervention group (post intervention) were compared. This comparison is known as a “between group” comparison. If a difference between the two groups was found, it would indicate that the intervention (skills training) was able to help individuals who were exposed to bullying become more psychologically flexible. To determine whether the intervention (ACT skills training) had indeed helped to improve the participants’ psychological flexibility, the pre and post scores of the intervention group were compared. This comparison is known as a “within group” comparison. A two-factor ANOVA was also conducted to determine whether there was an interaction between the two sets of pre and post scores between the intervention and control group.

### **Study 3 – Participants’ Perspectives**

In the third study, a qualitative approach was adopted. To have a more detailed understanding of how the participants felt the intervention had helped them to become psychologically flexible, verbatim statements from the sessions (3 sessions) were used. This study is also used to test the third hypothesis:

*Bullied victims who gone through an ACT Intervention will show an increase in their psychological flexibility score as compared to when they did not receive the ACT intervention.*

This qualitative approach was adopted in order to map out the effect of the intervention and also acted as a supplement to the quantitative approach, which, by itself, only could provide a snapshot of the current state of affairs (psychological flexibility and exposure to workplace bullying).

## **7.1 Study 1– Workplace Bullying And Psychological Flexibility**

### **7.1.1 Boxplot – NAQ-R and Statistical Analysis**

To determine the relationship between psychological flexibility and workplace bullying, the scores were collected using the NAQWAAQ (this is a combined questionnaire made up of both the NAQ-R and WAAQ). Each set of results (NAQ-R and WAAQ) was represented in a boxplot, a histogram (depicting the distribution of scores) and then a combined scatterplot showing the relationship between psychological flexibility and workplace bullying (correlation analysis). The statistical analysis (Pearson Correlation) is represented in Table 1. All statistical results and graphs were formulated using Rstudio, Version 1.0.153.

## Boxplot - NAQ-R

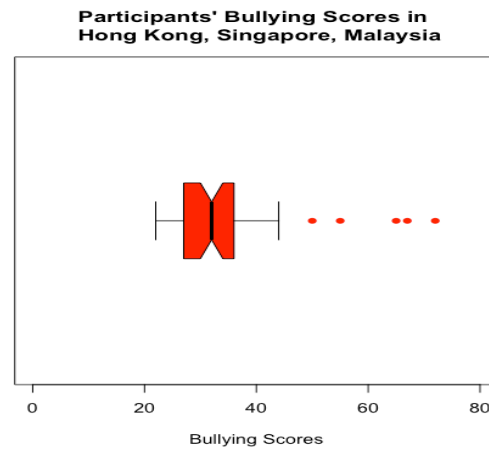


Figure 1 – Participants' Bullying Scores of 50 participants in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia (Boxplot)

Statistics Analysis													
	vars	n	mean	sd	median	trimmed	mad	min	max	range	skew	kurtosis	se
X1	1	50	33.76	11.16	32	31.68	7.41	22	72	50	1.79	3.11	1.58

Table 1 – Participants' Bullying Scores of 50 participants in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia (Statistic Description)

Based on the bullying scores collected from the participants and represented in the boxplot above, the median is 32. The two cut off scores ranges suggested by Notelaers and Einarsen (2013) for NAQ-R are: participants who score between 33 and 45 are considered to have experienced preliminary bullying; participants who score 45 and above are considered to have experienced severe bullying. Looking at the representation of scores on the boxplot, those who scored above the median and above the top quartile would have experienced preliminary bullying. Five of these participants (outliers) fall in the category of being exposed to severe bullying.

### 7.1.2 Histogram – NAQ-R

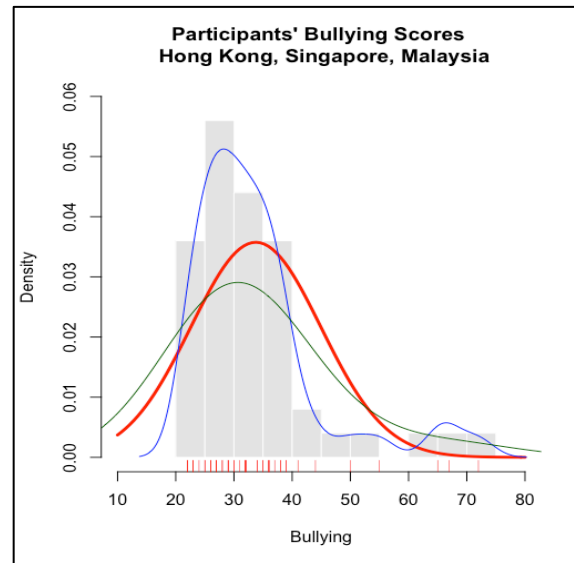


Figure 2 - Participants' Bullying Scores of 50 participants in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia (Histogram)

Before embarking on the statistical analysis of the scores collected, it was necessary to ensure that the scores had fallen within a normal distribution. In the histogram shown above the scores are skewed positively to the right, with most scores densely populated between approximately 22 to 39 (as indicate by the Kernel density blue and green lines and also by the line plots under the histogram). A few of these scores tail off beyond 60. This means that the mean is greater than the median (33.76). However, as the cut off scores are 33 to 45, and 45 and above, scores that fall within these two ranges are of interest in this research. These scores indicate that the participants are targets of bullying. This is what this research is interested in; those who have been exposed to either preliminary and or extreme forms of bullying.

Notelaers and Einarsen (2013, p 678) suggest that, even when participants score between 22 and 32 (and so are considered as not having been exposed to real bullying with no actions required), there is, however, a need for a primary intervention. This can take the form of a bullying

policy which can serve both as a statement of intent and as a document that provides guidance for formal or informal processes relating to bullying prevention (Rayner & Lewis, 2011). Notelaers and Einarsen (2013, p 678) suggest that when individuals score between 33 and 43, they have been exposed to a low systematic level of workplace bullying which can become more severe if organizations do nothing to help. Individuals who score 44 and above are victims of severe bullying who will require psychological treatment.

### **7.1.3 A Skewed Distribution – What to do?**

As illustrated in the graph above, the distribution is considered skewed (one that is not normally distributed). The question remains, should this distribution be rectified? What would be the consequences to, and the impact on, the research if the skewed distribution was modified?

Statistical inferences assume symmetry and to reduce a skew in a distribution, researchers may transform a variable (von Hippel, 2003). According to Box and Cox (1964), positive skew can be transformed by using skew reducing techniques such as the logarithm and the square root. There are, however, benefits and costs in transforming a variable. There will be an issue of interpretation when a variable is transformed and conclusions about the transformed variable may no longer be applicable to the original variable before the transformation (Levin, Liukkonen, & Levine, 1996). According to von Hippel (2010), transformation can alter the shape of the relationships between variables; for example, if X is skewed but has a relationship with Y, square rooting X to alter its skewness will result in a curved relationship with Y. For this reason and because this research is only concerned with scores that classify preliminary and severe bullying,

bullying scores will not be transformed. This is because transformation would affect the statistical analysis between these scores and the psychological flexibility scores which will in turn affect the overall research.

#### 7.1.4 Boxplot – WAAQ and Statistical Analysis

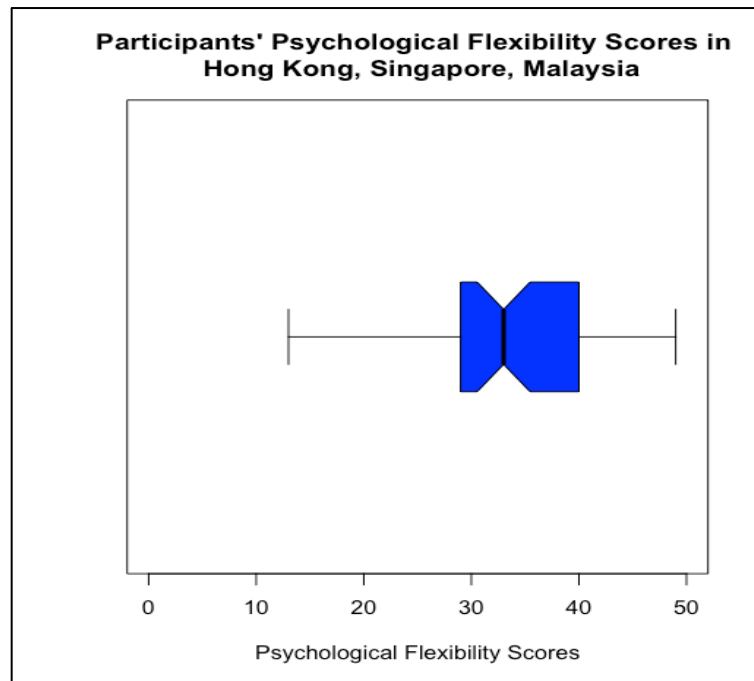


Figure 3 – Participants' Psychological Flexibility Scores of 50 participants in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia (Boxplot)

Statistics Analysis													
	vars	n	mean	sd	median	trimmed	mad	min	max	range	skew	kurtosis	se
X1	1	50	34	8.21	33	34.42	7.41	13	49	36	-0.06	-0.38	1.16

Table 2 – Participants' Psychological Flexibility Scores of 50 participants in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia (Statistic Description)



Based on the psychological flexibility scores collected from the participants and represented in the boxplot above, the median is 33. Since there is no cut off point for this score, it can be determined that any participants who score beyond 33 will be considered to be psychologically flexible. Those who score 33 and below will be deemed to be psychologically inflexible. In addition, following the suggestion of Professor Bond both the degree and the outcomes need to be considered in order to get a holistic and complete guide to the psychological flexibility of individuals in the context of the workplace. Therefore, in this research, only individuals who have been exposed to workplace bullying and have WAAQ scores that are either 33 or below are deemed to be psychologically inflexible.

WAAQ is a reliable and valid measure of psychological flexibility in the workplace which is consistent with ACT theory (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 1999). The tool has been found to be significantly associated with general mental health, neuroticism, conscientiousness, openness to experience, job satisfaction, absenteeism and work engagement (Bond & Guenole, 2013). Those who score 33 and below, who have become psychologically inflexible, because of their exposure to workplace bullying, are likely to show signs of mental ill health, disengagement from and dissatisfaction with their job, high level of absenteeism, closure to new experiences and a lack of conscientiousness at work (Bond, Lloyd & Guenole, 2013). All of these create psychological inflexibility in those being bullied at work. The following will show how the psychological flexibility scores obtained from the 50 participants are represented in a normal distribution.

### 7.1.5 Histogram – WAAQ

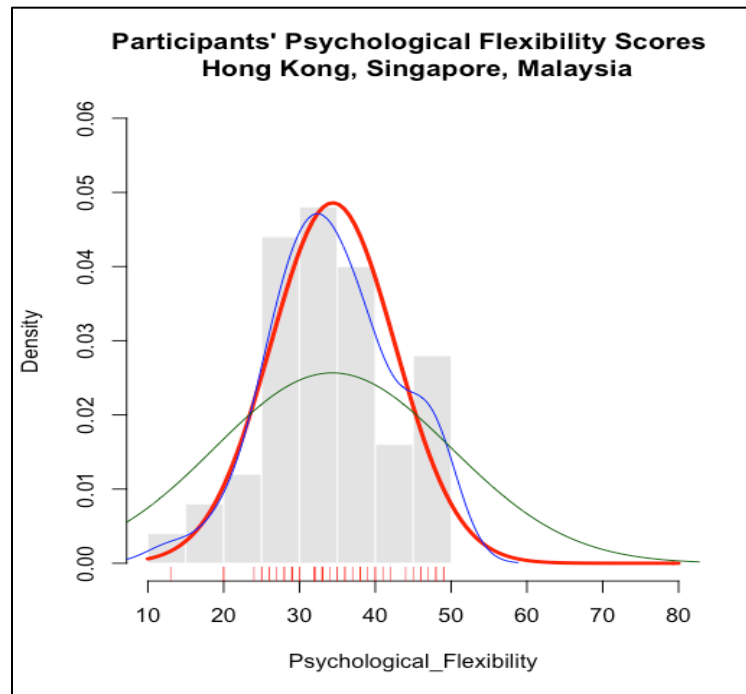


Figure 4 – Participants' Psychological Flexibility Scores of 50 participants in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia (Histogram)

The distribution of scores in the histogram falls within a normal distribution. In this research, the scores that matter are those that are 33 (median) or below as they indicate that participants have low psychological flexibility. To determine accurately that the participants who are bullied (either preliminarily or severely) are less psychologically flexible, it is necessary for the two types of scores to be measured together. To do so, a correlation analysis has been conducted.

### 7.1.6 Scatterplot NAQ-R and WAAQ

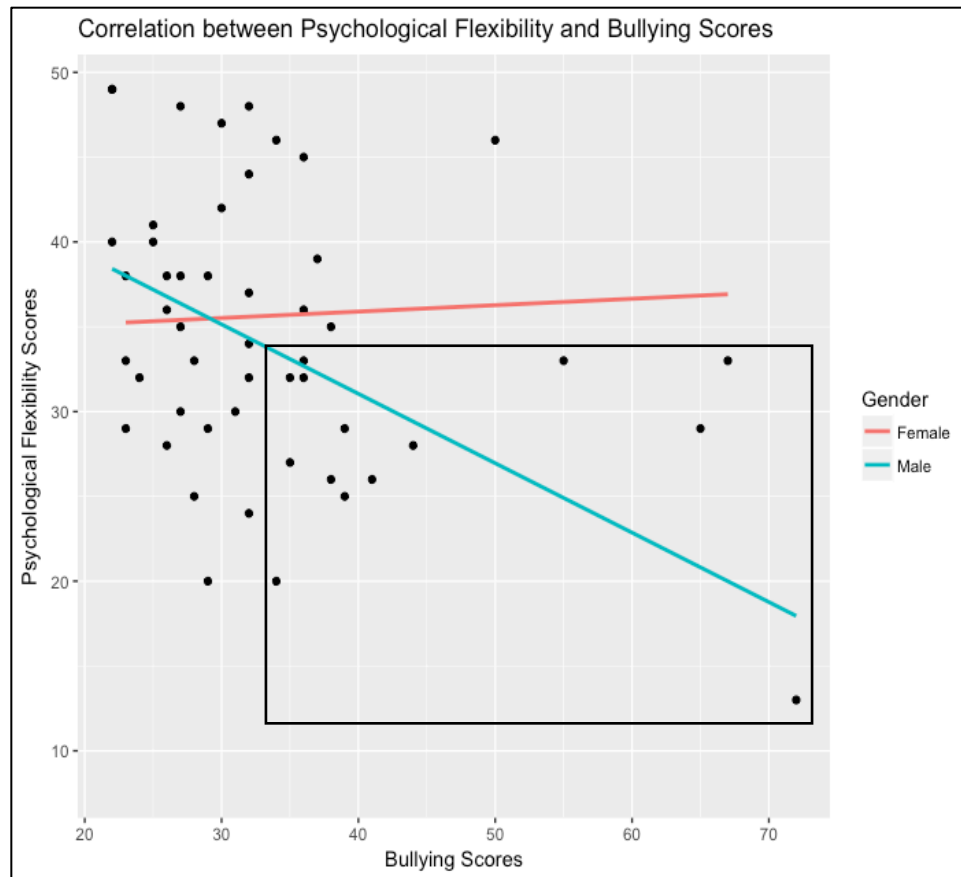


Figure 5 – Correlation of 50 Participants' Psychological Flexibility Scores and Bullying Scores (Scatterplot)

The scatterplot above shows a clear indication of a negative correlation between the bullying and psychological flexibility scores, meaning that those who have been exposed to bullying are also found to be psychologically inflexible. 14 participants (as indicated in the box - 5 female participants (36%) and 9 male participants (64%)) fall into the categories or the range of the cut off scores suggested by Notelaers and Einarsen (2012). 4 participants (1 female and 3 male) scored above 45 and this indicates that they have experienced severe bullying. 10 participants (3 female and 7 male) scored between 33 to 45, and this indicates that they have experienced

preliminary bullying. All these participants have psychological flexibility scores of 33 and below. 17 participants were found not to have been exposed to any form of bullying (they scored under the minimum bullying cut off point of 33 and have scored high in their psychological flexibility scores). 9 participants did not report any bullying but reported low psychological flexibility. There are 4 participants who have been exposed to preliminary bullying and have scored high on the psychological scores. There are two reasons why these results are so. For those who scored low on bullying scores but have high psychological scores, this indicates that these participants have not been exposed to any form of bullying, therefore in terms of their psychological flexibility, they are unlikely to be stuck in negative thoughts or emotions. Those whose scores fall within the preliminary bullying category and have high psychological flexibility scores, may have adopted active or passive strategies (Folkman and Lazarus, 1985) to cope with their exposure to bullying.

As the graph indicates, there is a negative correlation between exposure to workplace bullying and an individual's psychological flexibility score. When individuals are exposed to bullying, they are likely to score low on their psychological flexibility scores. This is supported by the statistical analysis. (See Table 3 below)

### 7.1.7 Pearson's Product -Moment Correlation

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation				
t	df	P-Value	95% CI	Correlation
-2.5999	48	0.006178	-1.0 -.13	-.351

Table 3 – Psychological Flexibility Scores and Bullying Scores (Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation)

The Pearson correlation between bullying scores (NAQ) and psychological flexibility scores (WAAQ) is -0.35,  $t = -2.6$ ,  $df = 48$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.006$ . The 95% confidence interval ranged from -1.00 to -0.12, which did not cross zero. The actual value of the correlation was negative, and this showed that bullying scores and psychological flexibility scores were negatively related. This meant that there was a significant relationship between those who were being bullied and their psychological flexibility because  $r = -.35$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed)  $< .05$ . This meant that the first hypothesis was supported and the null hypothesis was rejected.

*Individuals who are exposed to bullying will be less psychologically flexible compared to those who are not exposed to bullying.*

It should be noted that although the statistical analysis has indicated a negative correlation and a significant relationship between the two sets of scores (NAQ and WAAQ), this does not indicate any causation. Instead, the statistical analysis is merely indicating that a relationship of this size could not have been due to a random variation of the sample.

### 7.1.8 Bivariate Correlation Table

Bullying Scores and Psychological Scores - Table 4

	Being Bullied	Not Bullied	Total
Low Psychological Flexibility	14	11	25
High Psychological Flexibility	6	19	25
Total	20	30	50

### 7.1.9 Multiple Regression – Hypothesis 1

Descriptive Statistics - Table 5

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Bullying Score	33.76	11.160	50
Psychological Flexibility Score	34.40	8.209	50
Gender	1.48	.505	50
WorkYears	8.288	9.5011	50
AgeGroup	2.36	.964	50

Correlations - Table 6

Correlations						
		Bullying Score	Psychological Flexibility Score	Gender	WorkYears	AgeGroup
Pearson Correlation	Bullying Score	1.000	-.351	-.077	-.181	.006
	Psychological Flexibility Score	-.351	1.000	.145	.091	.134
	Gender	-.077	.145	1.000	-.216	-.279
	WorkYears	-.181	.091	-.216	1.000	.502
	AgeGroup	.006	.134	-.279	.502	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Bullying Score	.	.006	.298	.104	.483
	Psychological Flexibility Score	.006	.	.158	.265	.177
	Gender	.298	.158	.	.066	.025
	WorkYears	.104	.265	.066	.	.000
	AgeGroup	.483	.177	.025	.000	.
N	Bullying Score	50	50	50	50	50
	Psychological Flexibility Score	50	50	50	50	50
	Gender	50	50	50	50	50
	WorkYears	50	50	50	50	50
	AgeGroup	50	50	50	50	50

Variables - Table 7

Variables Entered/Removed <sup>a</sup>			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	AgeGroup, Psychological Flexibility Score, Gender, WorkYears <sup>b</sup>	.	Enter
a. Dependent Variable: Bullying Score			
b. All requested variables entered.			

Model Summary - Table 8

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.411a	.169	.095	10.619
a. Predictors: (Constant), AgeGroup, Psychological Flexibility Score, Gender, WorkYears				

ANOVA - Table 9

ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1029.106	4	257.277	2.282	.075b
	Residual	5074.014	45	112.756		
	Total	6103.120	49			
a. Dependent Variable: Bullying Score						
b. Predictors: (Constant), AgeGroup, Psychological Flexibility Score, Gender, WorkYears						

Coefficients - Table 10

Coefficientsa								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	48.904	8.538		5.728	.000	31.708	66.100
	Psychological Flexibility Score	-.471	.190	-.347	-2.478	.017	-.854	-.088
	Gender	-.724	3.204	-.033	-.226	.822	-7.178	5.729
	WorkYears	-.281	.186	-.239	-1.511	.138	-.654	.093
	AgeGroup	1.893	1.877	.163	1.008	.319	-1.888	5.673
a. Dependent Variable: Bullying Score								



The Adjusted R square value of .095 indicates that 10% of the variability in bullying can be explained by the individuals being psychologically flexible, the years they have worked, their age group and gender.

From the data on coefficients, the number of years individuals have worked is not statistically significant ( $p = .138$ ) to them being bullied. Both gender ( $p = .822$ ) and age group ( $p = .319$ ) were also found not to be statistically significant. The psychological flexibility score, on the other hand, shows that it is statistically significant ( $p = .017$ ) to individuals being bullied. This means that for every 1 unit of the psychological flexible score change, there will be a reduction of .471 in the bullying score. The 95% confidence interval will be between -.854 and -.088.

In summary, while the years of working, gender and age group do not correlate to the bullying experience of individuals, individuals when being bullied can become psychologically inflexible. Becoming psychologically flexible will allow bullied individuals to be better managing their bullied experience. The results support the first hypothesis that individuals who are exposed to bullying will be less psychologically flexible than those who are not exposed to bullying.

## **7.2 Study 2 – Intervention (Treatment) and Non-Intervention (Control) Groups**

To determine the relationship between the intervention (treatment) and non-intervention (control) group, a box plot (Figure 6) representing the scores between the two groups was plotted (see Table 11 - means, medians and quartiles). The scores obtained by both groups pre-and post-intervention are presented in Table 12. A statistical description of the pre-and post-scores of the

two groups is presented in Table 13. To determine the relationship between the two groups, a statistical analysis (Welch Sample T-Test) is represented in Table 14. All statistical results and graphs were formulated using Rstudio, Version 1.0.153.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the research, 14 participants were identified to have been bullied (according to the cut off scores suggested by Notelaers and Einarsen 2013) and were invited to participate in the next stage of the research. Of the 14 participants, 2 opted out from this part of the research, 2 were not contactable, thus only 10 participants remained. The group was randomly assigned into two groups, each consisting of 5 participants. One group of 5 participants (3 from Hong Kong, 1 from Singapore and 1 from Malaysia) was selected to go through the ACT skills training sessions while the other group of 5 participants (3 from Hong Kong, 1 from Singapore and 1 from Malaysia) did not receive any form of intervention. Both groups were then asked to fill in the WAAQ questionnaire again. For the participants in the intervention group, the WAAQ questionnaire was administered to them in the 3<sup>rd</sup> session, whereas those who were in the control group were sent the questionnaire for them to fill up and return to the researcher. The purpose of having participants in both groups fill in the questionnaire was to see whether there was going to be a difference in scores between the two groups (control and intervention). If a difference were to be identified, it could be deemed that ACT skills training could help individuals who were exposed to workplace bullying to become more psychologically flexible as compared with those in the control group. To determine this, the statistical test used was an independent t-test (unpaired t-test). Before doing the statistical test, the data was presented using boxplots.

### 7.2.1. Boxplot –WAAQ (Intervention and Control Groups) and Statistic Analysis

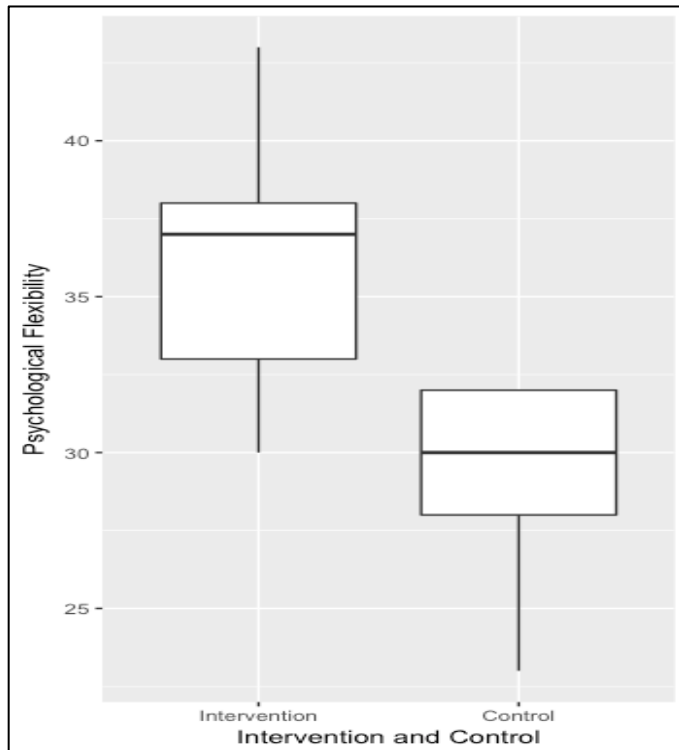


Figure 6 – Intervention group and control group (Boxplot)

Control Scores	Intervention Scores
Min : 23	Min : 30
1 <sup>st</sup> Quart : 28	1 <sup>st</sup> Quart : 33
Median : 30	Median : 37
Mean : 29	Mean : 36.2
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quart : 32	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quart : 38
Max : 32	Max : 43

Table 11 – (Statistic Description)

The boxplots above showed the different groups (ACT skills training – intervention and Control – no intervention) participants were allocated to and their scores. For those who did receive the intervention, the lowest score was 30 and the highest score was 43. For those in the control group, the lowest score was 23 and the highest score was 32. The top score in the intervention group was higher than the highest score in the control group and this indicated that this participant in the intervention group was more psychologically flexible than the top scorer in the control group. The lower quartile range was larger for those in the control group than for those in the intervention group which indicated that 25% of the participants in the control group had more variability in psychological flexibility scores than the lowest 25% of participants in the intervention group. The median for the intervention group was higher than that of the control group, which indicated that

the participants in the middle were more psychologically flexible than those in the control group. The whiskers in the intervention group boxplot were asymmetrical, and this indicated that the range of top scores was dissimilar to that in the lower 25%. This meant that the top 25% were more psychologically flexible than those in the lower 25%.

In Table 12, the scores of the 10 participants (5 – Intervention and 5 – Control) from two periods – pre-and post-intervention are recorded. In the intervention group, 2 participants (participant 1 – 30 and participant 3 – 33) out of the 5 participants have scores that are 33 or below (this is a cut-off score that has been applied in this research). The other 3 participants have scores that are above the 33 cut-off point (participant 2 – 38, participant 4 – 37 and participant 5 – 43). In the control group, two participants (participants 4 and 5 – 32) have similar scores pre-and post-intervention. The remaining 3 participants show a slight increase in their post scores (participants 1 (23) and 2 (28) have an increase of 3 points and participant 3 (30) has an increase of 4 points). Despite the slight increase of their post scores, these participants' scores are still below the cut-off score, which denotes that they are still psychologically inflexible. One possible reason for the slight increase of the scores could be that these participants (participants 1, 2 and 3) had adopted some form of strategy that might have resulted in an increased score.

Table 12 – Pre-and Post-Scores (Intervention and Control Groups)

Intervention and Control Pre-and Post Scores					
Participants	Intervention Pre	Intervention Post	Participants	Control Pre	Control Post
1	29	30	1	20	23
2	26	38	2	25	28
3	33	33	3	26	30
4	33	37	4	32	32
5	27	43	5	32	32

In Table 13, the statistic descriptions for both intervention and control group are recorded. In the intervention group, the mean = 36.2, median = 37, SD = 4.96 and SEm = 2.22. The SD indicates that the scores obtained in the group on average are over 5 points from the mean. The SEm indicates that the margin of error at 95% confidence interval is +/- 4.44, indicating that the true mean is likely to be between 31.76 and 40.64. For the control group, the mean = 29, median = 30, SD = 3.74 and SEm = 1.67. The SD indicates that the scores obtained in this group on average are over 4 points from the mean. The SEm indicates that the margin of error at 95% confidence is +/- 3.34, indicating that the true mean is likely to be between 25.66 and 32.34.

Table 13 – Statistic Analysis (Pre-and Post-Scores for Intervention and Control Groups)

<u>Statistic Analysis (Between Intervention and Control Groups)</u>					
Intervention Group					
Median	Mean	SE.mean	CI mean 0.95	Var	Std. Dev
37	36.2	2.22	6.17	24.7	4.96
Coef.Var	Skewness	Skewness.2SE	Kurtosis	Kurt.2SE	Normtest.W
0.14	0.08	0.04	-1.77	-0.44	0.98
Normtest. P					
0.94					
Control Group					
Median	Mean	SE.mean	CI mean 0.95	Var	Std. Dev
30	29	1.67	4.65	14	3.74
Coef.Var	Skewness	Skewness.2SE	Kurtosis	Kurt.2SE	Normtest.W
0.13	-0.62	-0.34	1.51	-0.37	0.86
Normtest. P					
0.23					

### 7.2.2. Welch Two Sample T-Test

Welch Two Sample T-Test (Intervention and Control Groups)						
t	df	P-value	95% CI	Means (Intervention)	Means (Control)	Effect Size
2.588	7.432	0.034	0.69 – 13.7	36.2	29	0.68

Table 14 – Welch Two Sample T-Test

To determine whether the results were significant and to test the 2<sup>nd</sup> hypothesis, an independent t-test (Welch Two Sample T-Test) on the scores obtained by the two groups (Intervention and Control) was conducted. The results were:  $t = 2.588$ ,  $df = 7.43$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.034$ . The 95% confidence interval ranged from 0.69 – 13.7 and the means for the two groups were 36.2 and 29. These results indicated that those in the intervention group ( $M = 36.2$ ,  $SE = 2.22$ ) did show

improvement in their psychological flexibility as compared with those in the control group ( $M = 29$ ,  $SE = 1.67$ ) and that the results were significant,  $t(7.43) = 2.588$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $r = .68$ , and this indicated a medium effect (Coe, 2002). That is to say that, those in the intervention group who had gone through the ACT skills training were more psychologically flexible than those in the control group. This meant that the 2<sup>nd</sup> hypothesis was supported (see below) and the null hypothesis was rejected. From the results obtained, the use of ACT as a self-administered intervention could be a useful therapy for those exposed to bullying in the workplace.

*Individuals who are exposed to bullying will show increased psychological flexibility with the application of ACT to help them cope with their psychological symptoms.*

7.2.3 Boxplot – WAAQ (Pre and Post Scores of Intervention Group) and Statistic Analysis

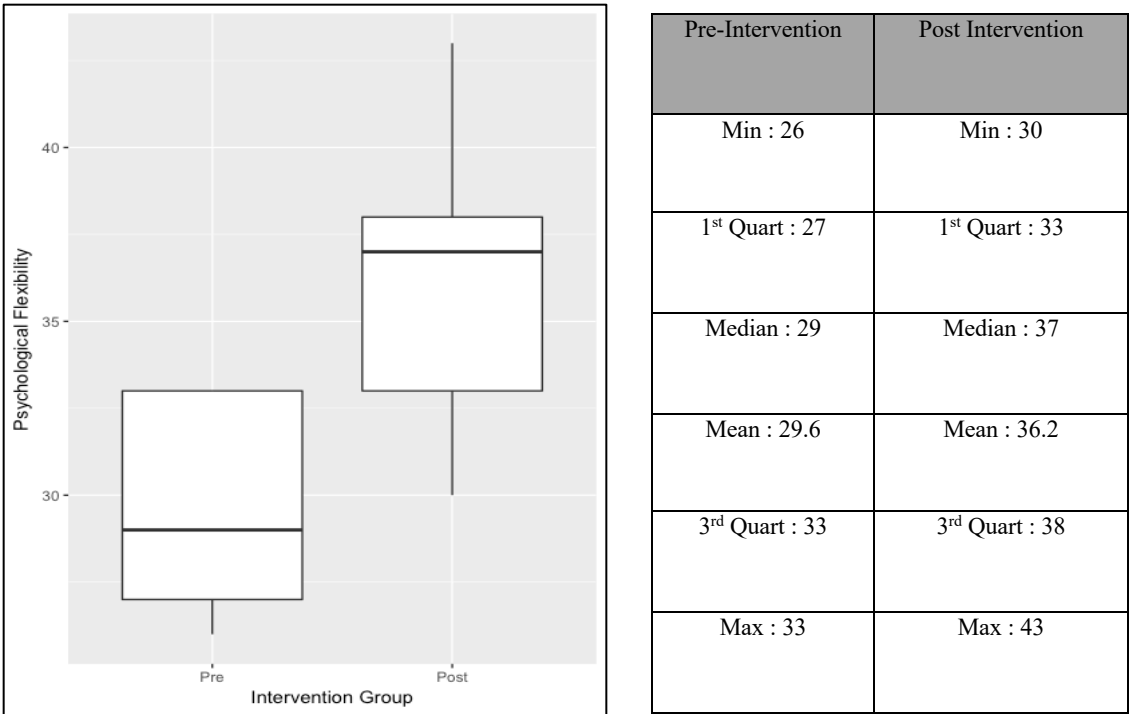


Figure 7 – Pre and Post Scores Intervention group (Boxplot)

Table 15 – Median, Mean and Quartiles

The boxplots above show the different conditions which those in the intervention group went through (pre – no intervention and post – received intervention). In the pre-intervention group, the lowest score was 26 and the highest score was 33. In the post intervention group, the lowest score was 30 and highest score was 43. The top score in the post intervention group was higher than the highest score in the pre-intervention group and this indicated that higher psychological flexibility was obtained in the post intervention group. The lower quartile range was larger for those in the post intervention group than that for the pre-intervention group, which indicated that participants who were within the 25% quartile in the post intervention group had more variability in their psychological flexibility scores (30, 33) than the lowest 25% quartile in the pre-intervention group (26, 27). The median for the post intervention group (37) was higher than the



pre-intervention group (29), which indicated that the participants in the middle of the post intervention group were more psychologically flexible than those in the pre-intervention group, as it had been determined earlier that those who had scores below 33 would be considered to be less psychologically flexible than those who had scores above 33. The whiskers in the post intervention group boxplot were asymmetrical and this indicated that the range of top scores was dissimilar to that in the lower 25%. This meant that the top 25% were more psychologically flexible than those in the lower 25%. That is to say that those (2 participants) in the lower 25% were found not to be psychologically flexible (since their scores were below 33) even though they did go through similar ACT skills training. The reasons for this could be inconsistencies in home practices and continuous behaviours of psychological inflexibility. See below verbatim statements taken from participants' sessions transcripts.

#### **7.2.3.1 Verbatim Statements from Participants 1 and 3 (See Participants' Transcripts 458)**

Based on the scores laid out in Table 12, both participants 1 and 3 have scores, as compared to the rest of the intervention group, that only show a slight increase or that remain the same after intervention (participant 1 – 29, 30 and participant 2 – 33, 33). Both of the scores obtained after the intervention for both of these participants are below or not above 33 (also the median), the suggested cut-off score for the WAAQ questionnaire. To make sense of why this is the case, the following verbatim statements taken from the transcript Sessions 2 and 3 with participants 1 and 3 are presented here to offer an explanation.

**Participant 1 (DS) – Scores 29, 30 (Sessions 2 and 3)**

**Mindfulness exercises (Body and Breath Exercise)**

*“Work priorities over the need to complete the tasks’*

**Values Based Actions**

*“I was only able to do 2 of the values based action on Day 4 and Day 6.” I could have been more robust”*

In his statements, Participant 1 admitted to being inconsistent in carrying out the home practices he was asked to do. The participant had been told that completing the home practice was important to apply the skills he had learned in the sessions.

**Participant 3 (RL) – Scores 33, 33 (Sessions 2 and 3)**

**Mindfulness exercises (Body and Breath Exercise)**

*“It is difficult to focus on something that needs to be done within a restricted time frame”*

*“Especially when I need to be quietened down, and focus on certain parts of the body. It is difficult”*

## Values Based Actions

*“I feel ashamed that I do not really work on the home practices. I am not good in school and not very motivated to do homework, as for the home practices, unless I have them with me, I tend to forget about them”*

In her statements, Participant 3 admitted that she found the breathing exercise within a constricted time was something she found difficult to do. She admitted that being motivated to do the home practices was something she struggled with. The scores of both participants post the intervention, maybe attributed to the fact that both participants were inconsistent in carrying out their home practices.

### 7.2.4 Two Way ANOVA to determine interaction

Table 16 - Analysis of Variance

Two Factor ANOVA (Intervention and Control Groups)					
Response :	df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F-Value	Pr (>F)
Post					
Treatment	1	129.6	129.6	9.1887	0.02
Pre	1	13.392	13.392	0.9495	0.36747
Treatment :	1	56.782	56.782	4.0259	0.09160
Pre					
Residuals	6	84.625	14.104		

The purpose of conducting a two way ANOVA is to determine whether there is an interaction effect between the two variables – pre and post intervention scores between the two different treatment groups (df = 1, F = 9.1887 and Pr = 0.02). The results show that there was no

interaction effect, The insignificant results can be attributed to the small mean differences between the two treatment groups (see Table 8). However, this does not indicate that those who have gone through the intervention did not demonstrate a change in their psychological flexibility. This can be seen in Study 3.

### 7.2.5 Statistical Analysis on Pre and Post Scores of Intervention Group

According to Table 17, the post-intervention scores of the other 3 participants, are above the 33 cut off point, which indicates that they had, after the intervention, become more psychologically flexible.

Table 17 – Pre-Post Scores for Participants in the Intervention Group

Intervention Pre-and Post-Scores		
Participants	Intervention Pre	Intervention Post
1 (DS)	29	30
2 (CH)	26	38
3 (RL)	33	33
4 (ZZ)	33	37
5 (THL)	27	43

In Table 18, the statistic descriptions for the pre-and post-intervention scores of the intervention group are recorded. From statistics described in the pre-intervention group, the mean = 29.6, median = 29, SD = 3.28 and SEm = 1.47. The SD indicates that the scores obtained in the group

on average are over 3 points from the mean. The SEm indicates the margin of error at 95% confidence interval is  $\pm 2.94$ , indicating that the true mean is likely to be between 26.66 and 32.54. For the post-intervention group, the mean = 36.2, median = 37, SD = 4.97 and SEm = 2.22. The SD indicates that the scores obtained in this group on average are over 4 points from the mean. The SEm indicates that the margin of error at 95% confidence is  $\pm 4.44$ , indicating that the true mean is likely to be between 31.76 and 40.64.

Table 18 – Statistic Analysis (Pre-and Post-Scores for Intervention Group)

<u>Statistic Analysis (Pre-and Post-Intervention)</u>					
Pre-Intervention					
Median	Mean	SE.mean	CI mean 0.95	Var	Std. Dev
29	29.6	1.47	4.08	10.8	3.28
Coef.Var	Skewness	Skewness.2SE	Kurtosis	Kurt.2SE	Normtest.W
0.11	0.07	0.04	-2.17	-0.54	0.86
Normtest. P					
0.23					
Post Intervention					
Median	Mean	SE.mean	CI mean 0.95	Var	Std. Dev
37	36.2	2.22	6.17	24.7	4.97
Coef.Var	Skewness	Skewness.2SE	Kurtosis	Kurt.2SE	Normtest.W
0.14	0.08	0.04	-1.77	-0.44	0.98
Normtest. P					
0.94					

To determine whether the mean difference between the pre-and post-scores obtained from the participants in the intervention group is zero, a Paired T-Test was conducted.

### 7.2.6 Paired T-Test

Table 19 – Statistic Analysis (Paired T-Test : Pre-and Post-Scores for Intervention Group)

Paired T-Test (Pre-and Post-Intervention Group)					
t	df	P-value	95% CI	Means (Intervention)	Effect Size
-2.0913	4	0.1047	-15.36 – 2.16	-0.66	0.72

As the results obtained in the independent sample T test between the post scores of both the control and intervention groups were significant, the assumption was that the pre-and post-scores within the intervention group (dependent T Test) should also be significant. However, this was not found to be the case. The results were:  $t = -2.09138$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.104$ . The 95% confidence interval ranged from  $-15.36 - 2.16$ ,  $\text{mean} = -0.66$ . The result indicated that in the intervention group, despite a reported medium effect,  $r = .72$  (Coe, 2002), the result was not significant as  $p > .05$ . To find out whether the scores from the participants in the intervention group in both pre and post intervention were correlated, a correlation analysis was conducted (see Table 20).

### 7.2.7 Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation

Table 20 – Pre and Post Psychological Flexibility Scores Intervention Group (Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation)

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation				
t	df	P-Value	95% CI	Correlation
-0.843	3	0.2305	-1.0 – 0.6	-0.44

A correlation analysis was done to determine the relationship between the pre-and post-intervention scores. The correlation between the two scores was  $r = -0.44$ ,  $t = -0.843$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p$ -value = 0.23. The 95% confidence interval ranged from -1.00 to 0.6. The actual value of the correlation was negative but it was not statistically significant as  $p > .05$ . Based on the dependent T test and correlation results on both the pre-and post-scores in the intervention group, the 2<sup>nd</sup> hypothesis was not supported.

On average, participants did increase their psychological flexibility after the intervention with skills training ( $M = 36.2$ ,  $SE = 2.22$ ) as compared with before the intervention ( $M = 29.6$ ,  $SE = 1.47$ ),  $t(4) = -2.0913$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $r = .72$ . Although the results showed no correlation between the two sets of scores, there was, however, a moderate effect size (Coe, 2002). According to Coe (2002, page 1), *effect size* (APA Publication Manual, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, pages 33 and 34) can be used to quantify the size of the difference between two groups and to determine the effectiveness of a particular intervention. This means that although there was not a great difference found between the scores in the two conditions (pre-and post) one can assume that the skills training did contribute to the participants' psychological flexibility. This was made evident by the increase of scores in most of the participants' post skills training sessions. This indicated that the skills training taught in the

intervention group, which was self-administered, was likely to have been effective. As indicated by the results above, when both scores were compared between two conditions (pre-and post-intervention) of the intervention group, the difference in means was small, which rendered the difference not statistically significant despite the fact there was a moderate effect. As both groups were randomly allocated, the initial differences between the two groups were not likely to account for any differences in the outcome. However, it cannot be ruled out that the sample size could have been a possible reason why the results turned out to be not statistically significant. In addition, the difference could be a result of reasons based on how the participants practised the home practices. For example, Participants 1 and 3 were both inconsistent in their home practices, and this could have affected their approach to their negative thoughts and emotions (see below verbatim statements taken from the sessions transcripts from Participants 1 and 3). This could have resulted in them feeling psychologically inflexible.

#### Participant 1(DS)

*“Looking at the home practice knowing that I need to do it” and feeling guilty for not doing it.”*

*“Work priorities over the need to complete the tasks.”*

*“As I mentioned that I don’t feel that I have put it into application in many many instances in the past 3 weeks. But I understood it and saw the value to it.”*



Participant 3 (RL)

*"When I needed these skills, in my recollection there were two incidents that I missed applying the method (monsters in the bus – acceptance) to adjust my own emotions and thoughts."*

*"I am not good in school and not very motivated to do homework, as for the home practices, unless I have them with me, I tend to forget about them."*

*"The second thing, this exercise to me, I will think what are the real application... I am a person that is really easily stressed and easily depressed person so how to change my behavior? I think it is very difficult to change one's habit, I think the biggest challenge is for me... When I got used to do something...."*

Therefore, it is likely that in order to see the effect of the application of ACT skills to increase an individual's psychological flexibility requires the consistent performance of home practices (mindfulness and value-based actions exercises). In the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the ACT skills training, all participants were asked whether the processes had helped them deal with their negative thoughts and emotions. The above results notwithstanding, all 5 participants in the intervention group felt that ACT skills training helped them to deal with negative thoughts and emotions that manifested as a result of their exposure to bullying.

## 7.2.8 Multiple Regression – Hypothesis 2

Descriptive Statistics - Table 21

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PsyFlexScorePost	32.60	5.621	10
PsyFlexScorePre	28.30	4.270	10
Intervention	1.50	.527	10
BullyingScore	41.80	10.717	10

Correlations - Table 22

Correlations					
		PsyFlexScorePost	PsyFlexScorePre	Intervention	Bullying Score
Pearson Correlation	PsyFlexScorePost	1.000	.422	-.675	.159
	PsyFlexScorePre	.422	1.000	-.321	.555
	Intervention	-.675	-.321	1.000	-.492
	BullyingScore	.159	.555	-.492	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	PsyFlexScorePost	.	.112	.016	.330
	PsyFlexScorePre	.112	.	.183	.048
	Intervention	.016	.183	.	.074
	BullyingScore	.330	.048	.074	.
N	PsyFlexScorePost	10	10	10	10
	PsyFlexScorePre	10	10	10	10
	Intervention	10	10	10	10
	BullyingScore	10	10	10	10

Variables - Table 23

Variables Entered/Removed <sup>a</sup>			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	BullyingScore, Intervention, PsyFlexScorePre b	.	Enter
a. Dependent Variable: PsyFlexScorePost			
b. All requested variables entered.			

Model Summary - Table 24

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.789a	.623	.434	4.230	.623	3.298	3	6	.100
a. Predictors: (Constant), BullyingScore, Intervention, PsyFlexScorePre									

Anova - Table 25

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	177.043	3	59.014	3.298	.100b
	Residual	107.357	6	17.893		
	Total	284.400	9			
a. Dependent Variable: PsyFlexScorePost						
b. Predictors: (Constant), BullyingScore, Intervention, PsyFlexScorePre						

Coefficients - Table 26

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>											
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	38.686	12.532		3.087	.021	8.021	69.351			
	PsyFlex ScorePre	.566	.398	.430	1.423	.205	-.407	1.540	.422	.502	.357
	Intervention	-8.107	3.079	-.760	-2.633	.039	-15.642	-.572	-.675	-.732	-.660
	Bullying Score	-.238	.172	-.453	-1.380	.217	-.660	.184	.159	-.491	-.346
a. Dependent Variable: PsyFlexScorePost											

The Adjusted R square value of .434 indicates that 43.5% of the variability in being psychologically flexible can be explained by the scores of being psychologically inflexible, the intervention received to become psychologically flexible, and the bullying score.

From the data on coefficients, the scores obtained by the bullied individuals prior to the intervention (PsyFlexScorePre) are not statistically significant ( $p = .205$ ) to the psychologically flexible scores obtained after the intervention (PsyFlexScorePost). Bullying scores are also not statistically significant ( $p = .217$ ). Receiving intervention, on the other hand, is statistically significant ( $p = .039$ ) to psychologically flexible scores after intervention (PsyFlexScorePost). This

means that for every intervention there will be a reduction of 8.107 in the psychologically inflexible score. The 95% confidence interval will be between -.15.642 and -.572.

In summary, receiving intervention (that is skills training to become psychologically flexible) has a significant impact on the psychological scores for bullied individuals. This supports the 2nd hypothesis that the use of ACT intervention on individuals who are exposed to workplace bullying will help them to become more psychologically flexible.

### **7.3 Study 3 – Participants’ Perspectives**

As shown earlier, in order to determine whether the results obtained from both the intervention and control groups were significant, an independent t-test (Welch Two Sample T-Test) was conducted. It was found that there was indeed a significant relationship ( $t = 2.588$ ,  $df = 7.43$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.034$ ); the 2<sup>nd</sup> hypothesis was supported and the null hypothesis was rejected. This, however, was not the case when the means of the pre-and post-scores of the intervention group were compared using a paired T-Test,  $t = -2.09138$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.104$ . The 95% confidence interval ranged from -15.36 – 2.16, mean = -.66. There was also no correlational relationship between the two scores,  $r = -.44$ ,  $t = -0.843$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.23$ . These results were calculated and presented using a quantitative approach. To create a balance in this research, the following sections will focus on the qualitative aspect of the data collected.

### 7.3.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a process whereby patterns or themes are identified within qualitative data. In this part of the research, a six-phase framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to extract the relevant themes from the qualitative data from the intervention stage, that is the ACT skills training. The six steps are :

Step 1 : Become familiar with the data	Step 4 : Review themes
Step 2 : Generate initial codes	Step 5 : Define themes
Step 3 : Search for themes	Step 6 : Write-up

Table 27 : Braun & Clarke's six phase framework for doing thematic analysis

#### **Step 1 : Become familiar with the data**

Looking through the notes gathered from the 5 participants who were selected for the intervention, initial notes were made. For example:

*All participants acknowledged the usefulness of mindfulness practice. Though some were inconsistent in the practice, they all agreed that being mindful helped. Being mindful helped them to focus on themselves and to be at the moment instead of letting their thoughts wander. The option to choose from the different types of defusion techniques allowed the participants to choose the relevant techniques that suited them. The practice of defusion helped the participants to recognise the negative thoughts and emotions they felt and they*

*learned how to create a safe distance from those thoughts and emotions. The participants all recognised the importance of values which could guide them to achieve the goals they set for themselves. They all recognised the value of the three weeks' training and how the training helped them to navigate the negative thoughts and emotions they felt because of their bullied experience.*

## **Step 2 : Generate initial codes**

The use of coding allows data to be broken down to smaller chunks of meaning. As in this research the concern was to see whether ACT skills training has an impact on bullied victims, it was necessary to use some form of coding. In this instance, an open coding was used. However, through the coding process, codes were developed and modified. In each transcript, each segment of the text was coded. After coding all the transcripts, relevant codings were all grouped together. A second round of examination of the various coding was conducted so as to modify the codings to reflect the relevance of the texts to the research questions. This was all done by reviewing each transcript by hand, working through hardcopies of the transcripts using pens and highlighters. (See Table 27)

## **Step 3 : Search for themes**

After modifying the codes, preliminary themes were identified. This was done by identifying codes that were connected to form a theme. For example, codes that indicated individuals who had self-awareness were classified under “being in the moment”.

<b>Preliminary Themes : Being in the Moment</b>  <b>Codes</b>  <i>"It was good to be able to be still and focus on the breathing."</i> <i>"My mind slow down and concentrated on the breathing"</i>  <i>"I only did 3 days of breathing exercise for the first week. I felt calmer and more focused."</i>  <i>"My mind was wandering, thinking about what to have for lunch and yoga class at 3pm but I pushed the thoughts away and concentrated on the breathing."</i>  <i>"Thoughts come and go but I allow myself to focus on the sensations"</i> <i>"More calm and relaxed, self-awareness."</i>  <i>"Actually throughout the whole process, I have already started to ... kind of, ah... in fact I feel more zen about it, obviously only because in certain part I understand that a lot of people did things that they did not mean, even though I felt that I was kind of bullied but maybe I am more empathetic in a sense that they are not. So, I should not take it personally and that they did not harm me as well."</i>	<b>Preliminary Themes : Disconnect from negative thoughts and emotions</b>  <b>Codes</b>  <i>"Things that might affect my future or important people around me, I am likely to change my behaviour, the time I spent on negative thoughts and emotions is reduced."</i>  <i>"I need to listen to my needs and regardless of what I do, I need to be mindful of my needs at the moment. Use ways to allow oneself to focus on an issue but to be able to see clearly after being relaxed and not to use approaches that I often use such as automatically avoid, suppress, and pretend that things did not happen. Instead to calm down and pay attention to what I need and face up to the situation."</i>  <i>"Always positive...put more dedication on the work you do, you are more in the moment, all the things you are worried about go more in the background, because you are in the moment... that is what I could notice, the benefits of it."</i>  <i>"I will not let them affect me, I just need to reframe them."</i>	<b>Preliminary Themes : Embracing negative thoughts and emotions</b>  <b>Codes</b>  <i>"Learn to accept my negative thoughts and emotions."</i>  <i>"Through this process I kind of gain more understanding as a person."</i>  <i>"just our mind."</i>  <i>"I know that if I feel better, I will be able to deal with the issues."</i>  <i>"understand the barriers that affecting me but instead of dwelling.... look at how to eliminate those barriers."</i>	<b>Preliminary Themes : Looking beyond the issues</b>  <b>Codes</b>  <i>"I will look at issues thinking about how I could do better and change from being negative to be positive about the situation."</i>  <i>"The exercises of stepping back and thinking about things differently was for me a very welcome change."</i>  <i>"I feel already different from the beginning strengthened psychological muscles."</i>  <i>"I now am able to change a behaviour, but I know it is still a long process but using tools such as cartoon technique and mindfulness exercises will help."</i>	<b>Preliminary Themes : Recognising what is important</b>  <b>Codes</b>  <i>"To tell you the truth I already started to recover from it and I never think about it anymore. So I just feel like I have move forward, which is one of my values."</i>  <i>"Felt like it (value) makes the job/work a bit more incremental and manageable."</i>  <i>"Learn more about myself in terms of my psychological functions and how I can be a better person and deal with my work and my life."</i>
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Table 27 – coding and preliminary themes



#### Step 4 : Review themes

In this phase, preliminary themes found in Step 3 were reviewed. This was done by using the cut and paste function on word documents to group together all the data that shared similar preliminary themes. A few things were considered before the final themes were decided. Do the preliminary themes make sense? Does the data support the themes? Was there any overlap in themes? Are there any other themes within the data? Once the review of the themes was completed, defining themes ensued.

#### Step 5 : Define themes

In the final refinement of the theme, each preliminary themes was defined. The themes defined in this stage were taken from the components of the ACT intervention that the participants had undergone. See thematic map (Figure 8) below

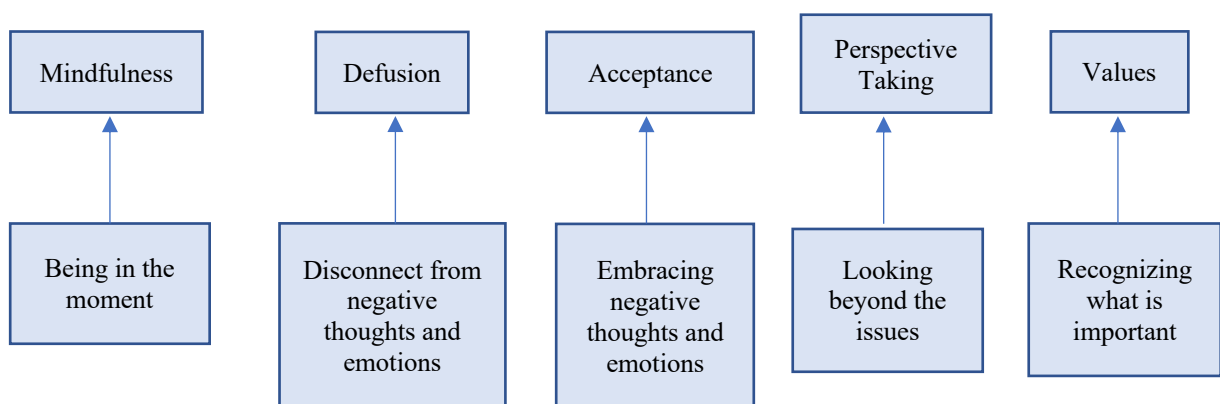


Figure 8 : Thematic Map

## Step 6 : Writing Up

In this last step, what had been found using thematic analysis was presented. The result is shown in the following paragraphs.

The following verbatim statements were extracted from the five participants' sessions transcripts:

### **7.3.2 Qualitative Data – Verbatim Statements from Participants 1 - 5**

#### Participant 1 (DS)

*“The exercises of stepping back and thinking about things differently were for me a very welcome change.”*

*“Felt like it (value) makes the job/work a bit more incremental and manageable.”*

*“It was slowed down and concentrated on the breathing.”*

*“My mind was wandering, thinking about what to have for lunch and yoga class at 3pm but I pushed the thoughts away and concentrated on the breathing.”*

#### Participant 2 (CH)

*“I feel already different from the beginning, strengthened psychological muscles.”*

*“Always positive...put more dedication on the work you do, you are more in the moment, all the things you are worried about go more in the background, because you are in the moment... that is what I could notice, the benefits of it.”*

*“If I understand it correctly...these exercises, one side is the values and the other side is the mindfulness.. mindfulness, that is more the easier part... the values part is somehow to see the connection between these two.”*

### Participant 3 (RL)

*“I now am able to change a behaviour but I know it is still a long process, but using tools such as cartoon technique and mindfulness exercises will help.”*

*“I have never thought that I would be able to change my behaviour, as I am a person that gets stressed easily followed by having negative thoughts.”*

*“Now I can see changes, for example,. when I have people who are not nice to me or mean to me, I will not let it affect me... let them be.”*

*“I need to listen to my needs and regardless of what I do, I need to be mindful of my needs at the moment. Use ways to allow oneself to focus on an issue but to be able to see clearly after being relaxed and not to use approaches that I often use such as automatically avoid, suppress, and pretend that things did not happen. Instead to calm down and pay attention to what I need and face up to the situation.”*

*“Old habits have diminished.”*

*“Things that might affected my future or important people around me, I am likely to change my behaviour, the time I spent on negative thoughts and emotions is reduced.”*

*“I will look at issues thinking about how I could do better and change from being negative to be positive about the situation.”*

*“Understand the barriers that affect me but instead of dwelling.....look at how to eliminate those barriers.”*

Participant 4 (ZZ)

*“More calm and relaxed, self-awareness.”*

*“Learn to accept my negative thoughts and emotions.”*

*“Learn more about myself in terms of my psychological functions and how I can be a better person and deal with my work and my life.”*

Participant 5 (THL)

*“Actually throughout the whole process, I have already started to ... kind of, ah... in fact I feel more zen about it, obviously only because in certain part I understand that a lot of people did things that they did not mean, even though I felt that I was kind of bullied but maybe I am more empathetic in a sense that they are not. So, I should not take it personally and that they did not harm me as well.”*

*“Also in the sense that I also kind of feel like, during the whole process that we are doing, that when you start to be mindful about yourself, the emotions you have towards certain activity, you also start to think that everybody goes through that, and then maybe my bully is not inherently a bad person, it is just a physical manifestation that he is not mindful of what he is doing. So that’s why I forgive him.”*

*“To tell you the truth I already started to recover from it and I never think about it anymore. So I just feel like I have moved forward, which is one of my values.”*

*“Through this process I kind of gain more understanding as a person.”*

*“Makes me feel that I am stronger than I think I am.”*

### **7.3.3 Themes**

From the above verbatim statements, a few themes can be extracted. This include: mindfulness and defusion, acceptance and perspective taking, and values.

#### **Mindfulness and Defusion**

Being mindful is one half of the Two Skills diagram (see Appendix 34). As stated in the skills training session and debriefed to the participants, being mindful allows them to notice about what they experience in the present, and also how easy it is to drift away in their thoughts. When individuals become mindful, they start to identify thoughts and emotions that might be problematic (fusion). By detaching and not allowing negative thoughts and emotions to create a hurdle, individuals are able to demonstrate defusion and work towards their values (Exercise 2 – Defusion technique (p12, Appendix 33, Exercise 4 – Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion (p14, Appendix 33). Based on the content of the verbatim statements described above, mindfulness is indeed a skill that all the participants showed that they had grasped. They showed an awareness of their own negative thoughts and emotions and quickly worked towards their values through values-based actions. In order to illustrate this fully, the verbatim statements quoted above are categorised below by theme.

## Mindfulness

*“My mind was wandering, thinking about what to have for lunch and yoga class at 3pm but I pushed the thoughts away and concentrated on the breathing.”*

*“More calm and relaxed, self-awareness.”*

*“Actually throughout the whole process, I have already started to ... kind of, ah... in fact I feel more zen about it, obviously only because in certain part I understand that a lot of people did things that they did not mean, even though I felt that I was kind of bullied but maybe I am more empathetic in a sense that they are not. So, I should not take it personally and that they did not harm me as well.”*

## Defusion

*“Things that might affect my future or important people around me, I am likely to change my behaviour, the time I spent on negative thoughts and emotions is reduced.”*

*“I need to listen to my needs and regardless of what I do, I need to be mindful of my needs at the moment. Use ways to allow oneself to focus on an issue but to be able to see clearly after being relaxed and not to use approaches that I often use such as automatically avoid, suppress, and pretend that things did not happen. Instead to calm down and pay attention to what I need and face up to the situation.”*

*“Always positive...put more dedication on the work you do, you are more in the moment, all the things you are worried about go more in the background, because you are in the moment... that is what I could notice, the benefits of it.”*

## Acceptance and Perspective Taking

When individuals recognise their negative thoughts and emotions, they can choose to do something about them. Of course, the more effort used to either suppress or tackle negative thoughts and emotions can only pull individuals away from what matters to them – their values. On the other hand, when individuals start to identify, recognise and accept negative thoughts and emotions, essentially they have begun to create a safe psychological distance between themselves and those negative thoughts and emotions (see Exercise 1 – Monsters (Passengers) in the Bus (p11, Appendix 33), Exercise 3 – Cartoon Voice Technique (p12, Appendix 33), and Exercise 5 – Physicalizing Exercise (p15, Appendix 33). In doing so, individuals can begin to view negative thoughts and emotions as merely what they represent, as a bit of a language, no more, no less. Looking at the verbatim statements made by the participants, it is apparent that they have, in the short time of three sessions, shown that they have not only grasped but have applied the skills they have learned.

### Acceptance

*“Learn to accept my negative thoughts and emotions.”*

*“Through this process I kind of gain more understanding as a person.”*

### Perspective Taking

*“Also in the sense that I also kind of feel like during the whole process that we are doing that when you start to be mindful about yourself, the emotions you have towards certain activity, you also start to think that everybody goes through that, and then maybe my bully*

*is not inherently a bad person, it is just a physical manifestation that he is not mindful of what he was doing. So that's why I forgive him."*

*"Things that might affect my future or important people around me, I am likely to change my behaviour, the time I spent on negative thoughts and emotions is reduced."*

*"I will look at issues thinking about how I could do better and change from being negative to be positive about the situation."*

*"The exercises of stepping back and thinking about things differently was for me a very welcome change."*

*"I feel already different from the beginning strengthened psychological muscles."*

## **Values**

In the course of their ACT skills training, individuals were told that values were their sense of purpose, life direction and meaning. To achieve their values, they need to perform values-based actions and understand that the performance of each values-based action will bring them closer to their values (Compass Metaphor, Appendix 36). From the verbatim statements, the participants have shown that they consider values as something important to them, and that they will not let any negative thoughts or emotions prevent them from working towards their values.

## **Values**

*"To tell you the truth I already started to recover from it and I never think about it anymore. So I just feel like I have move forward, which is one of my values."*

*"Felt like it (value) makes the job/work a bit more incremental and manageable."*

*"Learn more about myself in terms of my psychological functions and how I can be a better person and deal with my work and my life."*



The thematic evidence gathered qualitatively has provided a good insight into the perspective of the participants in the intervention group. Although only going through 3 sessions of skills training, the participants in the intervention group were able to demonstrate their understanding of mindfulness, defusion, acceptance, perspective taking and values-based actions and values. All of these accounts for the increase of their scores for their psychological flexibility.

#### **7.4 Overall Summary**

Being bullied and experiencing low psychological flexibility were found to be significant in the sample used in this research. A multiple regression conducted supports the first hypothesis that individuals who were exposed to bullying will be less psychologically flexible than those who were not exposed to bullying. Changes were reported in the psychological flexibility of those who were taught to use ACT skills. Far smaller changes were reported for those who did not receive any ACT skills training.

Although the difference between the pre and post scores obtained by the intervention group was not significant, it was significant when the post scores of both intervention and control groups were compared. A multiple regression conducted to test hypothesis 2 also found that receiving intervention (that is skills training to become psychologically flexible) had a significant impact on the psychological scores for bullied individuals. One explanation for the disparity between the results could be that the sample size was too small to obtain any significant differences in the scores. This might very well be true; however, it cannot be ignored that other factors may also have played a part in the results. For example, an examination of the qualitative verbatim evidence taken from the participants' session transcripts shows that 2 participants (Participants 1 and 3)

were not consistent in their home practices and this could have resulted in them still feeling psychologically inflexible according to their scores. Conversely, qualitative evidence from the other 3 participants (Participants 2, 4 and 5) shows that they had become aware of their negative thoughts and emotions through their home practices, and this resulted in their increased scores post intervention. All this seems to suggest that, to see the effect of the application of ACT skills, that is an increase in psychological flexibility, consistent practice and application of the skills set is essential.

The three studies provide a good insight into the way individuals who had been exposed bullying and then who had undergone the skills training in the three sessions, showed a change in their mindset towards negative thoughts, emotions and moods. The studies conducted in this research have importance, as they support the provision of a tool for bullied victims to use a form of self-intervention (ACT) to help them to deal with their experience. The studies should encourage other researchers to focus on coping strategies to assist individuals being bullied in the workplace.

## **CHAPTER 8 : Discussion, Limitations and Further Research**

### **8. Discussion, Limitations and Further Research**

This final chapter of the thesis will be divided into three parts. In Part 1, the discussion will give a brief reminder of the reasons why this present thesis research is conducted. This will be followed by a discussion of the results of the three studies. The focus in Part 2 will be on the limitations of this research and how they might impact on the results obtained. In Part 3, the discussion will look at how the results in this research can be built upon for further research in this area.

#### **8.1 PART 1**

In this part of the chapter, the discussion will focus on the reasons why this thesis research was conducted and will discuss the results obtained in the three studies undertaken in this research. To understand the reasons for this research, there is a need to revisit the following:

- What constitutes workplace bullying behaviours?
- Workplace bullying definitions
- The measurement of workplace bullying
- Asian research into workplace bullying
- Impacts on Bullied Individuals – The Psychological Impact, The Physical Impact and The Professional Impact
- The focus of this thesis research

The second half of Part 1 will analyse the results of the three studies conducted as part of this research.

## **Why This Thesis Research Was Conducted**

As background to an analysis of the three studies in this research, it is important to be reminded why this research will be a welcome addition to recent work in the field of workplace bullying.

### **8.1.1 What constitutes workplace bullying behaviours?**

Workplace bullying, while it is an ubiquitous phenomenon, is not easy to define. This is because there is, till today, no consensus on what kind of behaviours are considered as negative acts or workplace bullying behaviours. For example, in North America, bullying behaviours can include counterproductive work behaviour such as deliberate harm done to organizations or others (Rountundo & Spector, 2010); aggression, rumour mongering, lack of cooperation and physical assault against others (Penney & Spector, 2002); workplace defiance, which comprises behaviours that contravene organizational norms that can be both detrimental to organizations and their members (Robinson & Bennett, 1995); and workplace aggression, aggressive behaviours which are performed by one or more perpetrators towards others (Neuman & Baron, 2005). In Europe, workplace bullying behaviours can be caused by humans or by organizations. For example, Einarsen (1999) believes that workplace bullying takes place when there is an interplay of relationship between people. Zapf & Gross (2001) believe that predatory bullying occurs when one individual exerts power over, or exploits, another. They also classify dispute-related bullying

as one individual bullying another in an escalated interpersonal conflict. Leymann (1993) believes that organizations are responsible for bullying. He suggests that how work is designed, how leaders behave, the low morale of employees, poor conflict management and how vulnerable individuals are not protected are all factors that can result in employees being bullied in the workplace. Since there is no common agreement as to what constitutes bullying behaviours in the workplace, the definition of workplace bullying remains a problem. In the next paragraph, three different workplace bullying definitions will be discussed.

### **8.1.2 Workplace Bullying Definitions**

The multitude of definitions for workplace bullying that have been put forward by researchers in this field are influenced by: the geographical and culture perceptions of researchers or agencies offering the definitions. For example, despite the fact that the agencies and researchers are similar in establishing the frequency and causes of bullying in the workplace, the definitions provided by the Geneva-based International Labour Organisation (ILO); the American Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI); and by the Scandinavian team Einarsen et al (2003) all differ remarkably. To a degree, however, whilst there remains no single universal definition of workplace bullying, there is a consensus as to what are the practical and physical constituents of workplace bullying. For example, the three agencies and group researchers cited above all agree that workplace bullying can be committed by one or more persons against one or more persons, and that the behaviour can consist of verbal, psychological and physical abuse.

### **8.1.3 The measurement of workplace bullying**

Partly because the definitions of workplace bullying is so problematic, similar issues arise when it comes to the measurement of workplace bullying. There are no agreement on the definite and prescribed ways of doing so. Some researchers believe that measuring bullying behaviours should be done objectively while others believe that information extracted from individuals can provide a richer and better understanding of how workplace bullying can occur. Nevertheless, from an organization's standpoint, information that is extracted from either ways of measurement can be important and useful. This is because the information provided from both sources will enable organizations to identify the causes of bullying in their workplaces, which will then enable them to implement changes to rectify and prevent workplace bullying. Sadly, while some organizations might act to protect their employees from being exposed to bullying in the workplace, currently most organizations will simply adopt an approach of denial or unwillingness to discuss such phenomena. The reasons that organizations are unwilling to address workplace bullying are: that workplace bullying is not an issue high on their strategy or human resources agenda; that organizations have preferred to resort to out of court settlements between themselves and bullied victims; that when there is a plentiful supply of labour in the market, organizations are happy to let bullied victims leave; and finally simply that organizations have not realised, or have refused to acknowledge, the impact of workplace bullying.

This is despite the obvious economic advantages which accrue from stopping workplace bullying. Examples of these economic advantages are : a reduction of sickness absenteeism (Kivimäki et al, 2000; Einarsen & Raknes, 1991; Hoel and Cooper, 2000a; and Vartia, 2001); an

increase of productivity (Mitchell and Bates, 2011; Loeppke et al, 2009; Mattke et al, 2007; and Goetzel et al, 2004); and a reduction in the estimated cost organizations will stand to lose due to workplace bullying (Leymann, 1990; and Rayner, 2000).

From a victim's perspective, either approach to measuring workplace bullying can be seen as beneficial. This is because through a form of measurement individuals can be reassured that their organizations for which they work are committed to helping them to reduce their exposure to workplace bullying and eventually ameliorate the phenomena.

Have the difficulties in defining and measuring workplace bullying created obstacles to research in this area? Fortunately this is not the case. A quick look at the International Association of Workplace Bullying and Harassment (IAWBH) website will show that interest in workplace bullying research remains strong. There is a very large and growing amount of research in this area, but it is still largely dominated by research done in the West.

#### **8.1.4 Asian research into workplace bullying**

There is very little workplace bullying research done in Asia or with a focus on an Asian workplace sample (Jiang et al, 2012; Hong et al, 2014; and Seo et al, 2012). This can be due to the fact that Asian employees view bullying very differently as compared to their western counterpart. The other reason could be the fact that culture in Asia is widely varied and this affects the perceptions of what workplace bullying is. There is no standard Asian version of a workplace bullying measuring tool.

Regardless of the lack of adequate Asian research, one thing remains constant throughout the workplace bullying research there, that is that bullied individuals will usually have to deal with the impact of bullying by themselves.

This research is innovative as its sample consists of participants that are part of the Asian workplace in three different countries: Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia and because it deals with a self-administered intervention.

#### **8.1.5 Impacts on Bullied Individuals : The Psychological Impact, The Physical Impact and The Professional Impact**

The impact of workplace bullying on individuals can affect them psychologically, physically, and also professionally.

##### **The Psychological Impact**

When individuals are being bullied, their mental and well-being of bullied individuals can be affected. Such individuals will experience physical exhaustion and mental depression, which can lead them to report sick from work more often (Devonish, 2014). Lack of sleep (Hansen et al, 2016; Lallukka et al, 2011), stress (Hogh et al, 2012) and psychosomatic symptoms (de Meseguer et al, 2008) are also found to be common in those who are exposed to workplace bullying.



## **The Physical Impact**

As a form of defence, and to help them make sense of their experience, victims of bullying will resort to using coping strategies, such as confronting their bullies, seeking help from their organizations or friends and avoiding or suppressing their bullying. Using any form of coping strategy can itself be something that causes a strain to bullied individuals. To allow themselves to stop thinking about and to escape from their bullying experience momentarily, individual may resort to: the use of drugs (Neidhammer et al, 2004; Traweger et al, 2004; Lalluka et al, 2012); indulging in over eating (Streigel-Moore et al, 2002); excessive alcohol consumption (Giorgi, 2010); and even the practice of unsafe sex (Stall et al, 2002). When individuals rely heavily on drugs, over eating, alcohol and unsafe sex practices, they may become addicted to the very ‘distraction’ that was supposed to provide momentary solace from their bullying experience. As a result, such individuals will now have to deal with both the impact of their workplace bullying experiences and their newly acquired addiction. When individuals are stuck in such vicious cycles, it will be very difficult for them to see the light at the end of the tunnel. This can affect their professional standing and eventually may cause the loss of their employment.

## **The Professional Impact**

With the recent trends such as the ‘MeToo’ movement, where individuals are calling out their perpetrators for all types of harassment and bullying, one might imagine that speaking out about workplace bullying would become easier. This, unfortunately, remains not the case. One possible reason for this is the sense of shame experienced by victims (Luoma et al, 2012). To openly admit to being a victim of workplace bullying may be considered a loss of face (Hu, 1994).

To maintain their social standing, individuals may retaliate to their bullying by behaving counterproductively and so destabilise the status quo in the workplace (Rotundo and Spector, 2010). They may also choose to leave their organization in defiance or disbelief that they had been subjected to workplace bullying. Whatever option individuals choose to preserve their professional image, they will still carry with them the baggage of the bullying experience, such as feelings of “*why me?*” or “*I must be weak to allow this to happen to me!*”

There is a need for individuals who have been exposed to workplace bullying to deal with the burden of their psychological baggage.

#### **8.1.6 The focus of this thesis research**

The focus of this thesis research stems from the impact of workplace bullying that individuals face. What can individuals who are caught in a bullying situation do to help themselves? To date, little research has been done that focuses on intervention that individuals can adopt and use. Of course, some commentators might argue there is no need for any type of self-administered intervention because understanding the antecedents and the causes of workplace bullying will ensure that changes take place within the workplace environment. However, hitherto, this has not been the case. Workplace bullying still remains a topic that most have preferred to keep a secret. It is generally not discussed in any organizational meetings until bullied individuals decide to make it known, often in a form of litigation against a bully or bullies or an organization they have worked for. Even if and when organizations have consciously made an effort to curb or prevent workplace bullying, one thing they do not do is to offer help to bullied individuals, both to get through the whole experience of dealing with the bullying and to help them deal with their experience

psychologically. There is generally a need for, but a lack of, support to be offered by organizations to bullied employees. There is a concomitant lacuna research on self-administered intervention for bullied individuals. This is exactly what this thesis research seeks to do. The self-intervention strategy identified to be tested in this research is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). This therapy is described as a ‘third wave therapy’ (Hayes et al, 2012) that comprises six inter-related core areas (acceptance, cognitive defusion, being present, self-as-context, values and committed actions) to help individuals become psychologically flexible. Being psychologically flexible means

*‘an ability to focus on the present moment and depending upon what the situation affords, persist with or change one’s (even inflexible, stereotypical) behaviour in the pursuit of goals and values’* (Bond, Flaxman & Bunce, 2008).

ACT has been chosen because it encourages individuals to accept their negative feelings and thoughts, such as fear, anguish and frustrations can manifest themselves when individuals are being bullied. This choice was suggested by research in which ACT has been found to be useful to deal with mental health stigma (Masuda et al, 2007), reduction in depression, anxiety, fatigue, and experiential avoidance (which is the opposite of acceptance), and improvements in positive mental health (Fledderus et al, 2011). Thus, it was postulated that were ACT to be used to help bullied individuals as a form of self-intervention strategy, they would learn to accept the psychological baggage they carried because of their bullying experience. They would recognise the impact of being tied down by that baggage and would work on moving towards their own values through their committed actions. Were bullied individuals to do that, they would be able to

break away from the chains of their unwanted thoughts, emotions and feelings and would be free to live their lives.

Before testing whether ACT could indeed be a useful self-intervention strategy, and one that bullied individuals could adopt and use, the first step taken was to determine whether individuals were indeed psychologically inflexible when they had been exposed to bullying in the workplace. This was laid out as Research Question 1 and Hypothesis 1.

#### Research Question 1

- 1) Are bullied victims psychologically inflexible as compared to those who are not bullied?

The first hypothesis

*Individuals who are exposed to bullying will be less psychologically flexible than those who are not exposed to bullying.*

To answer the Research Question 1 and Hypothesis 1, Study 1 was conducted.

#### **8.1.7 Why was Study 1 important?**

This study is important because it creates the basis to test the application of ACT as an intervention that bullied individuals can use. 54 participants were given a questionnaire which was made up of both the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) and the Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ). The two questionnaires were combined to become one (NAQWAAQ), which was used in Study 1. There was almost an equal number of

participants in terms of gender (26, 52% were male; 24, 48%, were female). The age of the participants ranged from 24 to 56 and above and they came from a wide variety of industries and held either the job titles of managers/directors or non-managers/directors. The participants in this research were from Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia.

#### **8.1.8 The identification of bullied individuals**

To identify individuals who had been exposed to workplace bullying, scores from NAQ-R within the NAQWAAQ were identified. Two sets of cut off points were used as suggested by Einarsen et al (2009). Individuals with scores between 33 and 45 were considered to have been occasionally bullied, and those who scored 45 and above were considered to have been victims of bullying. Out of the 50 participants who answered the questionnaire (4 participants did not return the questionnaire), 5 participants were identified to have been victims of bullying (their scores were above 45), 14 participants were identified to have been occasionally bullied (their scores were between 33 to 45), and 31 participants were identified as not having been bullied (their scores were below 33). The advantage of using a questionnaire like the NAQ-R is that it identifies bullied victims. The questionnaire also allows the classification of participants into the two categories of workplace bullying exposure.

#### **8.1.9 The identification of psychologically inflexible individuals**

The scores obtained in WAAQ, within NAQWAAQ, were used to determine whether individuals were psychologically flexible or psychologically inflexible. Unlike NAQ-R, WAAQ has no stipulated cut off points by which individuals can be categorised as psychologically flexible

or inflexible. According to the original WAAQ (See Appendix 46), it is clear that the higher the scores an individual gets, the greater the psychological flexibility. However, the lack of a cut-off point in WAAQ means that there is no score to determine psychological inflexibility. To seek clarification, the researcher consulted Professor Frank Bond (one of the creators of WAAQ), who confirmed that there was no cut off point in WAAQ for psychological inflexibility. However, he suggested that a method of determining whether an individual was psychologically flexible or inflexible was *“to look at the degree of the relationship and the outcomes”*. In the context of this research, this would be the relationship between the variables – that is to say if an individual was classified to be occasionally bullied or was a victim of bullying, and that the individual’s psychological flexibility score was not too high, this individual would be deemed to be psychologically inflexible. Since there was no cut off score to work with, it was decided to use the median (33 – see page 7 of Chapter 7 – Statistic Description) of the psychological flexibility scores obtained from the 50 participants as a point of reference. This meant that those who were occasionally bullied or were victims of bullying (that is those with scores of 33 and 45, and scores of 45 and above) and had obtained psychological flexibility scores of 33 and below, were considered as being psychologically inflexible.

#### **8.1.10 Analysis of NAQ-R and WAAQ Score**

Using the two sets of cut off score criteria for both the bullying and psychological flexibility scores, a correlation analysis between those who were exposed to workplace bullying and those who were identified as psychologically inflexible, was conducted. Based on the scatterplot (see Figure 5, page 215 – Participants’ Psychological Flexibility Scores and Bullying Scores ), 14 participants (5 females and 9 males) were identified. These participants also obtained

psychological flexibility scores of 33 and below. The Pearson correlation between the two scores indicated that there was a negative correlation of  $-.35$ . This indicated that those who are found to be occasionally bullied and to be victims of bullying tend to be psychologically inflexible. While the results cannot definitively state that being bullied causes individuals to be psychologically inflexible, they do show a relationship between being bullied and how flexible bullied individuals are in the way they behave and think. That is to say, that bullied individuals will, because of the experience they face (workplace bullying), behave in ways that could affect their psychological well-being, and that this will prevent them from moving towards what matters to them most. It was the establishment of the relationship between being bullied and being psychologically inflexible that enabled the research to move on to Study 2 and 3, and to test out Research Questions 2 and 3, and Hypotheses 2 and 3.

#### Research Question 2

- 1) Is ACT the right intervention to help bullied victims become psychologically flexible?

#### The second hypothesis

*The use of ACT intervention on individuals who are exposed to workplace bullying will help them to become more psychologically flexible as compared to those who did not receive any intervention.*

#### Research Question 3

- 1) Will bullied victims show a change in their psychological flexibility after they have gone

through an ACT intervention?

The third hypothesis will be

*Bullied victims who have gone through an ACT intervention will show an increase in their psychological flexibility score as compared to when they did not receive the ACT intervention.*

To answer Research Questions 2 and 3 and Hypotheses 2 and 3, Study 2 and Study 3 were conducted.

#### **8.1.11 Study 2 - Could bullied individuals become psychologically flexible?**

In Study 2, the purpose was to verify whether the use of ACT could indeed help bullied individuals become psychologically flexible. To investigate this, the 14 participants were randomly assigned into two groups: a control group and an intervention group. Of the 14 participants, 2 participants decided that they did not want to participate in this part of the research and 2 were not contactable. A total of 10 participants were left and were randomly assigned into the two groups. The scores obtained from the two groups were recorded pre- and post-intervention. On performing a Welch Two Sample T-Test (independent T-Test) between the post scores of the two groups, the results showed  $t = 2.588$ ,  $p = .034$  which was  $< .05$ , and this indicated that the participants who went through the intervention did show that they had become more psychologically flexible than those in the control group. Of course, to address the elephant in the room, the scores of 2 participants in the intervention group (participants 1 and 3) did not surpass the cut off score of 33, which indicated that the intervention did not work for them. An explanation



for this anomaly was found in the issue of the skills learned in the intervention group that needed to be practiced and applied consistently in the home practises (see Appendix 33). The verbatim statements taken in the intervention sessions from these two participants (see Chapter 7 – Verbatim Statements from participants 1 and 3 taken from transcript sessions 2 and 3), clearly indicate that they were both inconsistent in their home practices, which resulted in their post-intervention scores remaining low. It is also postulated that another reason why participants 1 and 3 showed little change in their psychological flexibility was their inherent control-based form of acceptance (a form of learned helplessness as described by Maier and Seligman, 1976). When an individual exhibits such a form of acceptance, he or she essentially has resorted to adopting a resigned approach to he or her experience. This seems to have resulted in participants 1 and 3 not making an effort to apply the skills they had learned that promoted psychological flexibility. This postulation is supported by the following statements from both participants 1 and 3:

Participant 1(DS)

*“Work priorities over the need to complete the tasks.”*

Participant 3 (RL)

*“I am not good in school and not very motivated to do homework, as for the home practices, unless I have them with me, I tend to forget about them.”*

Nonetheless, the other 3 participants in the intervention group did show great increases in their psychological flexibility scores which supports Hypothesis 2. This suggests that any change to psychological flexibility is attributed to the degree to which individuals want to apply and practise

the skills they have learned. That is to say, individuals are in control of their own psychological flexibility. It is only through the practice of skills they have learned that individuals will be able to master the skills they have learned, achieve their values based actions, and move towards their values. As the saying goes, “*practice makes perfect.*” It is also through constant practice that individuals will learn to notice what works and what does not; this is known as *workability*. According to Polk, Schoendorff, Webster & Olaz (page 11, 2016), *workability* means “*noticing whether behaviours work to move us in a chosen direction*”. Workability will enable participants to tailor made their practice to suit their needs. For example, in the course of the training sessions for the intervention group, they were encouraged to use the *Brief Body and Breath Awareness* exercise for their mindfulness exercise (see Appendix 33), but they were told that if they could find other ways of being mindful, that would work too. ACT is not a prescriptive therapy, instead it is a therapy that uses mindfulness approaches to assist individuals to walk in the path of their chosen values and to live a psychologically flexible life.

#### **8.1.12 Analysis of pre and post scores in the intervention group**

To determine whether there was indeed a difference between the psychological flexibility scores, pre- and post-intervention, of the bullied individuals in the intervention group, a comparison between their mean scores was conducted. This was done using a Paired T-Test and the results were  $t = -2.09$ ,  $p = .104$  which was  $> 0.5$ . To find out whether the pre and post scores were correlated, a correlational analysis was conducted. The results were  $r = -0.44$ ,  $t = -0.843$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.23$ . Although there was a weak negative correlation, it was not statistically significant,  $p > .05$ . The two factor ANOVA did not show any interactions between the means of the scores obtained by the two groups. All these results, however, did provide an indication that

bullied individuals, who had gone through ACT skills training were more able to change their psychological flexibility than those who had not receive the training. There are two possible reasons why the results were not statistically significant: 1) sample size; and 2) duration of the intervention.

#### **8.1.13 Reasons why the results were not significant**

The first reason why the results were not significant can be attributed to the fact that the sample size used in this thesis research was too small. This resulted in too limited variability in the scores obtained by the participants which therefore did not show a big enough difference to support the effect of the ACT skills training.

The second reason why the result obtained was not significant could have been due to the duration of time allocated to the ACT skills training. In this research, the adoption of the 2+1 model and the frequencies of the sessions were based on *The Mindful and Effective Employee - An Acceptance & Commitment Therapy Training Manual for Improving Well-Being and Performance* by Flaxman et al (2013). Much research that has dealt with behavioural health and primary care has shown that significantly short intervention can be effective and useful for patients. For example it has been found that patients with mental health impairment are able to reduce their symptoms with improved functioning and are able to integrate socially after a short intervention (Bryan, Corso, Corso, Morrow, Kanzler & Ray Sannerud, 2012; Bryan, Morro & Appolonio, 2009; Cigrang, Dobmeyer, Bercknell, Roa-Bavarrete, & Yerian, 2006). In addition, Flaxman et al (p 44, 2013) state that a one week gap between sessions one and two is sufficient to allow participants to practise the mindfulness exercise and values-based actions, and that shorter training sessions

over four or more weeks can allow both participants and the trainer to reflect progress on a weekly basis (p 45, Flaxman et al, 2013). The one month gap between session two and three was chosen because it was found that a lengthier period of time had no impact on the overall improvements in the mental health, behavioural functioning and psychological flexibility of individuals (p 44, Flaxman et al, 2013).

Therefore, although in Study 2 the result was not as one would have expected due to the small sample size and the duration of the skills training sessions, this researcher strongly believes that the self-intervention programme ACT is efficacious for bullied individuals to use to alleviate the psychological baggage they carry. Cavanagh, Strauss, Forder & Jones (2014), in their systematic review and meta-analysis of 15 mindfulness and acceptance-based self-help intervention studies, reported that self-help interventions were indeed effective and that such interventions were associated with symptom change, such as significant reduction of depressive and anxiety symptoms. Based on their analysis of another 10 studies, Cavanagh et al (2014) reported that those who used self-help interventions were found to have higher mindfulness and acceptance skills compared with those who did not use any self-help interventions. What Cavanagh et al's study has shown is that mindfulness and acceptance skills can be self-learned; and that self-help interventions that comprise mindfulness and acceptance components can indeed help to mitigate depression and anxiety. This is in line with what this thesis research has found, that is by using ACT as a self- intervention, bullied individuals can help themselves use overcome their negative thoughts and emotions which they have as a result of their bullying experience.

The results in both Study 1 and Study 2 have been explained using a quantitative approach. To offer a balanced perspective for this thesis research, the discussion will next turn its focus to Study 3 that used a qualitative approach.

#### **8.1.14 Study 3 - Why a qualitative study?**

Researchers in social science have long argued about the merits of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Proponents of each approach believe that their approach has measurement validity, that is the operationalization of the research and how the results are obtained to reflect the concept these researchers seek to measure (this is also known as descriptive inferences, King, Keohane and Verba, 1994). As an example of the quantitative approach, in Studies 1 and 2, the use of a questionnaire and statistical analysis was able to support the research questions and hypotheses of this research thesis.

However, measurement validity applies not only to the quantitative approach. In the qualitative approach, valid measurements can be achieved as long as data is meaningfully captured. In the qualitative approach, data gathered is interpreted in order that evidence can be extrapolated to support the concepts a researcher is seeking to test. This researcher considered that it was important in this thesis to also use the qualitative approach to draw out the perspectives of the participants, to learn their own experience of the ACT skills training and to discover how their training had helped them to become psychologically flexible. To do this, it was necessary to look through the sessions notes to analyse the verbatim statements in order to provide those evidence.

### **8.1.15 Participants' Perspectives**

In Study 3, the purpose was to provide evidence for this thesis research, which was to be taken from the perspectives of those 5 participants who went through the ACT skills training in the intervention group. The verbatim statements retrieved from the 3 Sessions not only provide evidence of the changes these participants experienced, evidence which was supported by the scores they obtained post intervention, but also provide thematic evidence that can be neatly categorised into five core areas: Mindfulness; Defusion; Acceptance; Perspective Taking; and Values. The results from this study supported Hypothesis 3.

### **8.1.16 Mindfulness**

Why is mindfulness important? Apart from being part of an important component of psychological flexibility (see Appendix 34), mindfulness has been found to be associated with greater well-being (Brown and Ryan, 2003). Individuals will be considered as being mindful when they are able to show enhanced attention to, and be aware of, their current experience or reality which is described as *open or receptive awareness and attention* by Deikman, (1982) and Martin (1997). From the evidence gathered in this thesis research, participants were able to demonstrate through their own words that they had shifted in their mindset. They were able to show through their home practices that they had adopted mindfulness; this was an important process on which they could build progress to the next stage of learning. They were able to show that they had defused cognitively from the negative thoughts and emotions that had prevented them from moving towards their own values. To be able to recognise and notice how their mind had drifted away, and to be able to maintain a calm exposure so as to realise and acknowledge their own

experience, were all good signs of how the participants had incorporated mindfulness to help themselves rationalise their state of mind. When participants were mindful, they could prepare themselves to acknowledge whatever their mind was going to throw at them. Through that acknowledgement, the participants were able to recognise negative thoughts and emotions that might cause them to become stuck in a cycle of vicious rumination. From the statements provided by the participants, it was sufficient to say that being mindful was something they had done well.

For example:

*“My mind was wandering, thinking about what to have for lunch and yoga class at 3pm but I pushed the thoughts away and concentrated on the breathing.”*

*“More calm and relaxed, self-awareness.”*

*“Actually throughout the whole process, I have already started to ... kind of, ah... in fact I feel more zen about it, obviously only because in certain part I understand that a lot of people did things that they did not mean, even though I felt that I was kind of bullied but maybe I am more empathetic in a sense that they are not. So, I should not take it personally and that they did not harm me as well.”*

### **8.1.17 Defusion**

When participants were able to prevent themselves from being sucked into a whirlpool of negative thoughts and emotions, they were essentially assessing their own state of mind. They were able to negotiate (defuse cognitively) with their manifested negative thoughts and emotions in such a way that they did not get trapped in situations from which they would find it difficult to escape. When this negotiation was done successfully, the participants were able to accept what they felt and thought, and to focus next on moving forward towards their values. This result

matches research done in this area. Larsson, Hooper, Osborne, Bennett & McHugh (2015), in their research to test the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring and defusion against a no instruction control for coping with negative thoughts, reported that comparatively defusion had significantly greater effects when compared to cognitive restructuring, was able to lower believability and increase comfort and positive affect. The verbatim statements from the participants provide evidence that the participants had applied defusion techniques to help themselves when they were faced with negative thoughts and emotions. For example:

*“Things that might affect my future or important people around me, I am likely to change my behaviour, the time I spent on negative thoughts and emotions is reduced.”*

*“I need to listen to my needs and regardless of what I do, I need to be mindful of my needs at the moment. Use ways to allow oneself to focus on an issue but to be able to see clearly after being relaxed and not to use approaches that I often use such as automatically avoid, suppress, and pretend that things did not happen. Instead to calm down and pay attention to what I need and face up to the situation.”*

*“Always positive...put more dedication on the work you do, you are more in the moment, all the things you are worried about go more in the background, because you are in the moment... that is what I could notice, the benefits of it.”*

#### **8.1.18 Acceptance**

Humans are programmed to either fight or run away when they are faced with danger (this is known as the fight or flight response). In the processes ACT, when an individual starts to avoid or run away from something they do not want to face, this is known as *experiential avoidance* (EA). According to Hayes, Wilson, Gifford, Follette & Stroschal (1996), EA is considered as a form



of avoidant coping process whereby individuals associate certain cognitions and environmental cues with physiological or psychological discomforts. To reduce their discomforts, individuals will engage in activities to distance themselves. It has been found that when individuals engage in experiential avoidance, they are likely to develop psychological disorders, such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, obsessive compulsive disorder, panic disorder and suicide ideation (Hayes et al, 1996; Hayes, Strosahl, Wilson, Bissett et al, 2004). This, fortunately, was not the case with the participants who had gone through the ACT skills training in this thesis research. The participants had learned to accept their negative thoughts and emotions, that is to be able to face their ‘monsters’ and not to run or fight with them. In accepting these discomforts, the participants were able to spend more time in focusing on how to achieve their goals and live a values-based life. For example:

*“Learn to accept my negative thoughts and emotions.”*

*“Through this process I kind of gain more understanding as a person.”*

#### **8.1.19 Perspective Taking (Self As Context)**

When an individual is caught up with negative thoughts and emotions, they tend to see their situations in a narrow perspective. This is inevitable, because all they can see are just that, negative thoughts and emotions. Their innate reactions are geared up to either deal with these thoughts and emotions head on or to recoil to a safe place in which they feel more comfortable. However, in doing so, individuals will have to face the thoughts and emotions again as they resurface. To be able to look beyond these thoughts and emotions, individuals learn to place their focus on things that really matter to them. This enables them to take a step back and review the

real impact of their thoughts and emotions. This is considered as perspective taking or putting self as the context (that is to be an observer of a situation) instead of being overwhelmed by negative thoughts and emotions. As Hayes (1984) puts it, in order to see from perspective, it is necessary for one to do so from a shifted perspective. When individuals learn to become observers and not tied to the content of events, they will be able to become aware of their experiences (Luoma et al, 2007) and also have a better sense about themselves. In this thesis research, the participants were able to demonstrate that they were able to do this. For example:

*“I will look at issues thinking about how I could do better and change from being negative to be positive about the situation.”*

*“The exercises of stepping back and thinking about things differently was for me a very welcome change.”*

*“I feel already different from the beginning strengthened psychological muscles.”*

#### **8.1.20 Values**

The trajectory towards psychological flexibility is propelled by how individuals decide what matters to them most. This is classified as values, a component of the six processes within the ACT model. Once individuals have identified their values, they will then decide on achievable actions that they can perform to attain their values (See Compass Metaphor, Appendix 36). That is to say, individuals will only be able to contribute to their own development as human beings when they work on what they truly value (Hayes, 2007). Unlike goals, values do not have a time stamp, instead they are ongoing. When individuals embark on the journey towards their values, they will begin to see how their actions can influence the quality of the journey. A good example

of how values can benefit individuals can be seen in the research done by Ciarrochi, Fisher and Lane (2010). These researchers investigated the relationship between 107 cancer patients' values and cancer related distress. They reported that greater success at valued living was generally correlated with improved psychological well-being, less cancer-related distress and less avoidant coping. In this thesis research, the participants were able to show that they were able to move beyond their experiences and embrace valued living. For example:

*“To tell you the truth I already started to recover from it and I never think about it anymore. So I just feel like I have move forward, which is one of my values.”*

*“Felt like it (value) makes the job/work a bit more incremental and manageable.”*

*“Learn more about myself in terms of my psychological functions and how I can be a better person and deal with my work and my life.”*

#### **8.1.21 Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches**

The use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in this thesis research has yielded both positive and negative outcomes as discussed in the above review of the three studies. Both negative and positive outcomes are not uncommon in research on such a sensitive topic as workplace bullying. Ultimately, regardless of which approach is being used, what is important in the use of these approaches is whether their results in this thesis research can be considered valid and generalisable to wider groups and circumstances (Maxwell, 1992). While the results of this thesis research can be considered valid, it is not definitive that what has been found in this thesis research can be generalisable. This is because of its sample size and also because of the small variance between the pre and post scores obtained by the intervention group.

### **8.1.22 The application and impact of using these approaches**

Despite the insignificant result obtained in Study 2, the results from both Studies 1 and 2 were able to provide an insight, at least statistically, about the relationship between workplace bullying and psychological flexibility. For Study 3, where the qualitative approach was used, the results were able to provide insights into the experience of the participants in the intervention group.

The use of either approaches or a combination of both approaches has been found to yield good results in research that uses ACT as an intervention. The following section will showcase some of these research.

#### **Research that used a quantitative approach includes**

- 1) Lloyd, Bond, and Flaxman (2013) – this research examined the use of ACT on emotional burnout. They assigned participants into an ACT or a waitlist control group and measured the outcome and mediator variables at four time points over a nine-month assessment period. They reported a statistically significant increase in psychological flexibility in the ACT group.
- 2) Fledderus, Bohlmeijer, Pieterse and Schreurs (2011) – this research looked at the use of ACT as a guide self-help programme for individuals who suffered psychological stress to help them to have a positive mental health. Participants in this research were randomized to three groups – self-help programme with extensive email support; self-help programme with minimal support; and a waiting list control group. The participants were required to complete measures before and after the intervention to assess depression, anxiety, fatigue, experiential avoidance, positive mental health and

mindfulness. The researchers reported in the experimental groups a significant reduction in depression, anxiety, fatigue, experiential avoidance and improvements in positive mental health and mindfulness compared with the waiting list condition group.

**Research that used a qualitative approach includes:**

- 1) Thompson, Vowles, Sowden, and Levell (2018) – this research looked at behavioural change in patients with chronic pain after the use of ACT. Qualitative data were collected both during and towards the end of treatment. 315 qualitative comments were collected from 104 participants from 16 consecutive treatment groups. The data collected were able to provide initial insights into the participants' perspectives of adaptive behavioural change as a result of the ACT programme.

**Research that used both qualitative and quantitative approach includes:**

- 1) Casselman and Pemberton (2015) – this research focused on the use of ACT for parenting psychoeducation for veterans with PTSD. The participants completed both pre and post treatment measures. The participants attended a parenting therapy group for 8 weeks with 1 hour sessions. In this research the researchers used the Reliable Change Index (RCI; Jacobson & Traux, 1991) to examine the changes of participant's scores (pre-post) which were statistically significant. The participants showed significant changes in positive parenting behaviours, parental satisfaction and psychological flexibility. Qualitative comments from the participants included the positive aspects of mindfulness breathing, defusion techniques for anger, acceptance techniques for difficult experiences and psychoeducation topics.

The above examples show that the use of both approaches is useful in determining the use of ACT as an intervention. To combine both methods within a research can only provide more insights to the research questions which this thesis has posed.

### **8.1.23 The measurement of validity**

The use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, albeit different, in this thesis research provide a relative notion of validity. Through the use of the two approaches, this research was able to accurately describe what had been observed and experienced (what is also known as descriptive validity). From that the results were then interpreted so as to enable the classification of the data. Although both approaches were able to provide different perspectives to the results, they were both similar in that they were used to address similar questions (research questions and hypotheses) and to collect similar data to answer those questions. The use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches was indeed useful especially when the main focus of this research had never been done before. Although the results might not be generalisable to a wider population, they do show that the use of ACT can be a successful option as a self-administered strategy for those who have been bullied.

## **8.2 PART 2**

### **8.2.1 Limitations**

In the following paragraphs, the focus will be on the various limitations identified in this thesis research that might have hampered the results obtained in the various studies conducted. The limitations include: sample size and participants; the cut-off scores; contamination of results; processes and procedures; format of delivery; and duration of intervention.

### 8.2.2 Sample Size and Participants

One of the obvious limitations of this research is the sample size. In particular, this was the size of the sample ( $n=50$ ) used for Study 1 and the sample size used for Studies 2 and 3 ( $n=10$ ).

In the initial design of this research, the intention was to reach out to organizational participants because past bullying research (Baillie et al, 2011; Balducci et al, 2011; and Cooper-Thomas, 2013) that focused on organizational culture, structure and practices as precursors to workplace bullying had been successful in surveying a huge number of participants. There was a conscious intention to target a few specific industries such as healthcare and legal, because of past bullying research done in these industries (see Hogh et al, 2011; Clausen et al, 2012). It was also intended to target organisations that had diversified portfolios of business. However, this approach did not yield success, so instead participants were drawn from samples that were available. One of the reasons for not being able to get a bigger sample was perhaps because of the way the invitation letter was written (see Appendix 31). While being truthful in letting organizations know about the purpose of the research, the letter perhaps could have been worded to better attract participation. For example, instead of using the words “negative acts at work” or “bullying”, it might have been more appropriate to use less emotive words. Words that might have indicated that organizations might contain workplace bullies might have given them grounds for assuming that they had been chosen for these reasons to participate in the research.

In hindsight, to encourage participation from organizations, it might have helped to approach and invite them to be involved in such sensitive research under the guise of employees’

wellbeing or workplace communication. Despite this limitation, for the actual research, although there were only 50 participants, there were enough data for the Study 1 to be conducted.

With regards to Study 2, the differences between the pre and post scores of the intervention group were not statistically significant and this can be easily attributed to the sample size ( $n=10$ ). While having more participants in the sample group would indeed help to obtain a favourable result, it has to be stated that the evidence gathered in Study 3 was able to provide a glimpse of how the participants used the skills they had learned to move themselves towards psychological flexibility, despite the small sample size.

The initial design of this research was to reach out to participants from Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and China. However, as there was no success in getting any participants from China, the sample makeup was made up totally from Hong Kong ( $n=31$ ), Singapore ( $n=14$ ), and Malaysia ( $n=5$ ). As these participants came from the sample that was available, there was no way to control or determine the number of participants in any of the specific countries. On the one hand, it was good to have different representations from different Asian countries participated in this research. On the other hand, perhaps, focusing on one country might have yielded better participation for the research, thus increasing the sample size.

### **8.2.3 The cut-off scores**

In Studies 2 and 3, the number was reduced from initially 14 to then 10 participants for the intervention (skills training sessions for the intervention group and no training sessions for the control group). This small number was not ideal as it affected the results obtained in Study 2 (not



statistically significant pre and post scores of the intervention group) which made it not generalisable to a wider sample. One of the reasons for the survival of this small number from the much larger group of participants was the application of cut-off scores. To identify individuals from the overall 50 participants who had fallen into the category of suffering from preliminary bullying and severe bullying, the range of the two cut off scores was: 33 and 45; and 45 and above. For the identification of whether an individual was psychologically flexible or not, the median score (this was 33) of the psychological scores of those who were identified as being preliminarily and severely bullied was used as a cut-off score.

The range of cut off scores as suggested by Notelaers and Einarsen (2013) was problematic. This is because, as they stated (2013, p 678), individuals who scored between 22 and 32, though not considered as being exposed to real bullying, did need primary intervention. It is contradictory to admit that those who scored between 22 and 32 required primary intervention but were not considered as having been bullied. If this range of 22 and 32 had been included, more targets would have been identified for this research. Of course, if this range had been included, the median score to depict psychological flexibility would also have changed and this would have affected the number of identified targets who were deemed psychologically inflexible.

To discretely categorise individuals according to a stipulated set of cut off scores ignores a wealth of rich data that those individuals whose scores are below 33 could offer and share. In such an instance, an in-depth interview approach (qualitative method) might well be appropriate. Through such an approach, it might well be possible to detect the early onset of bullying experiences to which individuals might have been exposed.

#### 8.2.4 The contamination of results

One limitation of this research might have been a contamination of its results. The researcher wore two hats in this research: as the main investigator of the research and as the instructor for the skills trainings for the intervention. While a contamination of results was possible, it was understood from the outset of the research that, in the course of the skills training sessions, the researcher would not initiate any discussion with regards to the participants' workplace bullying experience. Instead, the participants were only told that they would go through three sessions of psychological and behavioural skills training (see Appendix 33). This should have prevented any contamination of results. It would have been possible to have mitigated any possibility of such contamination had the researcher used an external individual to conduct the skills training sessions. However, at the time of the intervention (skills training sessions), the researcher was not able to find an external trainer who could have fulfilled the requirements suggested in pages 49-50 of the book - *The Mindful and Effective Employee - An Acceptance & Commitment Therapy Training Manual for Improving Well-Being and Performance*. According to those pages, a trainer is required to:

- 1) Have some background in psychology or a related behavioural science profession
- 2) Have attended a number of experiential ACT workshops to develop an expertise to use the approach for training

The researcher, in this instance has fulfilled these requirements as he is a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society and a registered Industrial-Organizational Psychologist with the Hong Kong Psychological Society, who has incorporated ACT in his

consulting work. He has also attended both an online ACT advanced course with Dr Russ Harris, in 2016 and a two-day workshop on ACT as a Brief Intervention with Dr Kirk Strosahl and Dr Patricia Robinson in London in 2015.

Although, in retrospect, using an external instructor for the sessions training could indeed reduce the possibility of a contamination of results, in the reality of conducting this research, such an arrangement was found to be unavailable.

### **8.2.5 Processes and Procedures**

As this is the first time an intervention such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) has been used in the area of workplace bullying, and the processes and procedures adopted were devised by the researcher, it is possible that some things might have been overlooked or not analysed impartially, for example, the processes and procedures themselves. In the skills training sessions, the processes and procedures were followed closely those suggested in the book *The Mindful and Effective Employee - An Acceptance & Commitment Therapy Training Manual for Improving Well-Being and Performance* by Flaxman et al (2013). For example, the handouts and instructions for the home practices advised as appropriate by this reference were given to the participants. Participants were also given time to ask any questions prior to the starting of each session. This was important for the researcher to gauge how much the participants had understood and whether they had applied the skills they had learned in the skills training sessions. This thesis research abided by the requirements delineated on pages 49 and 50 of the book. There was an implicit need to ensure that all processes and procedures were done correctly, because this is the first time ACT has been used in a workplace bullying research.

### **8.2.6 Format of Delivery**

The 2+1 delivery format adopted for the intervention was introduced by Flaxman et al (2013) in their book. The format requires participants to attend three sessions of training, with sessions 1 and 2 occurring in consecutive weeks and session 3 between one or three months after session 2 (Bond & Bunce, 2000; Flaxman & Bond, 2006, 2010b). Despite using the suggested format, 2 participants (participants 1 and 3) showed no or only a little change in their psychological flexibility score after the intervention. As argued before, the reasons why these two participants found to be psychologically flexible was because they were inconsistent in practicing in their home practices what they had learned. The format, however, did not affect the other participants in the intervention group.

### **8.2.7 Duration of Intervention**

For this research, one month was adopted instead of three months between sessions 2 and 3 because of two reasons: one being the availability of the participants for the intervention and the other being that research had shown that a lengthier period of time had been found to have little impact on the overall improvements in the mental health, behavioural functioning, and psychological flexibility of individuals (p 44, Flaxman et al, 2013).

According to Flaxman et al, when the training is delivered in a 2+1 format, each session is scheduled to last at least three hours to allow breaks and the completion of any evaluation measure. For this research, each session was conducted for 1 hour and 30 minutes with no breaks. It would have been advantageous to incorporate breaks in the training sessions as this might have

helped participants to have more time to absorb the materials, to practise the skills they had learned and to be able to seek clarification with regards to the skills, concepts and home practices they had been taught. Despite this, participants did have the opportunity to have ample time to absorb the materials outside of the training sessions, and were encouraged to seek clarification pertaining to what they had learned in the training sessions.

## **8.3 PART 3**

### **8.3 Further Research**

In this thesis research, the exploration of using ACT as a self-administered strategy for bullied targets has proven that the use of this therapy has promise. As this is the first time a piece of research on workplace bullying has focussed on helping bullied targets to tackle the psychological remnants of their bullying experience, the hope is that its results can be used as a springboard for future research to investigate self-administered strategies for bullied targets.

For future research in this area, based on the lessons learnt from this thesis research, researchers might want to consider the following points:

#### **8.3.1 A better scripted invitation letter**

Organizations will always have reservations when it comes to addressing issues like workplace bullying, as they would rather not discuss such matters even when they are fully aware that such negative behaviours exist. This, therefore, makes research in this area very difficult. To

get around this problem, one way to ‘infiltrate’ the workplace sphere to conduct research on workplace bullying would be to approach organizations and convince them that the research is to identify workplace communication issues or workplace stress due to negative acts in the workplace. Organizations might be more attracted to participate in such research were they to be offered some form of training, such as ACT, to enhance better communication skills and the reduction of stress in the workplace. While these are possible ways to ensure ‘a foot in the door’, care would still have to be taken to ensure that all ethical procedures were adhered to.

### **8.3.2 Specific targets**

With a better scripted invitation letter, it would be good to target sample populations that had been researched before, such as in the health industry (Hogh et al, 2011; Clausen et al, 2012), or to focus on one specific country. In doing so, there might be a better chance of getting more participation for the research than dependence on a convenient sample might allow.

### **8.3.3 Mitigation of the contamination of results**

To prevent any possibility of an experimenter’s bias causing a contamination of results, when an intervention programme such as ACT is being used, it would be preferable to have a separate instructor for the skills training sessions. By doing so, the researcher would be freed from playing a dual role, as the main investigator and the instructor. Thereby the researcher could take the role of an observer instead of actually conducting the training sessions. To further eliminate an observer’s bias, both the instructor and the observer (researcher) would be able to compare notes

on what they had observed and had written in the sessions. The adoption of such a procedure would enhance the quality and the accuracy of the data collected.

## **8.4 Conclusion**

Workplace bullying is a phenomenon that is ubiquitous in the organizations of all nations. In an era in which artificial intelligence and automation is beginning to steadily taking over jobs in the workplace, employees and organizations are equally affected in this. Organizations that adopt the use of artificial intelligence and automation are likely to find themselves transitioning employees out of their jobs or to other employment within the organizations. Transitioning increases the likelihood of bullying in the workplace, thus it is ever more important that targets of workplace bullying are able to fend for themselves and to be empowered to help themselves with some form of self-administered strategy. Investigating such a strategy has been the focus of this thesis research.

ACT has been successful in helping individuals to deal with different types of psychopathologies. These psychopathologies are similar to those experienced by bullying targets. The findings of this thesis research should be considered important as they provide preliminary evidence that ACT can be used to help bullied individuals deal with the psychological remnants of their bullying experiences. ACT empowers bullied individuals to face the bullying and the bully. For organizations seeking tools to help their bullied employees, ACT provides a self-administered strategy that is cost effective.

In conclusion, more work needs to be done on the use of ACT as an intervention for bullied targets. The benefits of such further research would be threefold

- the creation of an interest in the research of workplace bullying focusing on self-administered strategy
- the provision of insights to ACT practitioners and researchers into ways they could effectively uses ACT to help workplace bullying targets
- and lastly the provision to the targets of workplace bullying a strategy upon which they can depend to self-administer to liberate them from their experiences



## **APPENDICES**

## CHINESE WORKPLACE BULLYING SCALE (CWBS)

### INSTRUCTIONS

We would like to know HOW OFTEN you have experienced the behaviours described below. Please fill in this questionnaire by circling the most appropriate number. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Please answer ALL questions.

1=Never

2=Occasionally

3=Sometimes

4=Always

5=Continuously

No.	Description	1	2	3	4	5
1	Someone withholds information deliberately to hinders my work performance	1	2	3	4	5
2	My hard work in the workplace has been ignored	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am requested to work overtime	1	2	3	4	5
4	I cannot enjoy my entitled rights, such as holiday, due to work pressure	1	2	3	4	5
5	Someone insults or intimidates my personhood or my personal life	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am assigned work with heavy loads	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am watched over the shoulder when I work	1	2	3	4	5
8	Someone threatens me with violence or attacks me physically	1	2	3	4	5
9	I experience other's threatening behaviour (e.g. pointing finger at me)	1	2	3	4	5
10	Someone hinders my chance of promotion	1	2	3	4	5
11	I experience practical jokes set by someone with whom I do not have a good relationship	1	2	3	4	5
12	My main duties are cancelled and /or replaced by other trivial tasks	1	2	3	4	5
13	Someone hinders me of getting rewards or payments that I entitled	1	2	3	4	5
14	I am overly teased or experience other's sarcasm	1	2	3	4	5

*This is the end of the Scale*

Taken from Li, YX., Nie, GH., Li, YM., Wang, MH., & Zhao, GX. (2010) The Chinese Workplace Bullying Scale (CWBS) - The Structure and Validation. In Lawrence, T. Lam, Zhou, SJ. & Wan, G.B. (Editors) Psychological and Health-Related Assessment Tools Developed in China. p54. Bentham Science Publishers Ltd, Dubai, UAE.

**Malaysian Workplace Bullying Index (MWBI; Kwan, Tuckey & Dollard, 2016)**

1. Being requested to do work which is out of the job scope
2. Being requested to do work that is not within one's ability
3. Being requested to do unnecessary work which is not relevant to the job description
4. Being requested to do an excessive amount of work
5. Being requested to work overtime without pay
6. Being requested to do work which is supposed to be done by other co-workers
7. Being asked to do work alone without assistance
8. Being instructed to do work without guidance
9. Being forced to do work to meet deadlines
10. Having credit for the work taken by someone else
11. Being coerced or threatened to do work
12. Being threatened that privileges will be taken away by someone else
13. Being wrongly blamed if something is wrong
14. Being taken advantage of
15. Being scolded without relevant reason
16. Being make fun of
17. Being talked about behind one's back
18. Having rumours spread about oneself

Kwan, S. S. M, Tuckey, M. R., & Dollard, M. F. (2016). The development and validation of the Malaysian Workplace Bullying Index (MWBI). In S. S. M. Kwan (unpublished thesis), Workplace bullying in Malaysia: The role of psychosocial safety climate (PSC) in the secondary prevention of bullying (pp. 63-111). University of South Australia: Adelaide.

Box 1a – pre-research survey

Welcome to this survey. Your answers will be anonymous, confidentially kept and be used for this survey only.

Have you ever experienced bullying in the workplace?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

Please describe the bullying you have experienced in the workplace.

Please describe what you think are considered as bullying in the workplace.

What do you think victims should do when they are being bullied in the workplace?

## Appendix 4

### Box 1b - pre-research survey

What do you think organizations should do to prevent bullying in the workplace?

Should there be a legislation to deal with bullying in the workplace?

Do you think bullying in the workplace is a phenomenon that occurs outside of Asia?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

Please elaborate why you think workplace bullying is a phenomenon that occurs outside of Asia.

Please elaborate why you think workplace bullying is a phenomenon that is prevalent in Asia.

Table 1

EXPERIENCES
Constant belittling by my supervisor and threats to sack me. Humiliating me in front of colleagues and making sexually suggestive comment when alone in meetings.
Senior officers using their rank to intimidate subordinates.
People asked me intentionally about my weekend so that they could entertain themselves by my having to edit the actual events.
Threats about termination. Canadian teachers making anti-Korean comments when I worked at Korean International School. Canadian-Australian principal in International Section of Korean International School in Hong Kong tried to stir up anti-Korean feeling. I am Western and worked for Korean Section of Korean International School as English teacher.
Sexual harassment (female to male).
Using the broadest possible definition of bullying, my sexuality as an openly gay (albeit "don't ask don't tell behaving) man in the office was used against me by a homophobic woman who was my line manager.
Job 1: being threatened to be fired if my boss confirmed I was gay.
Job 2: being consistently verbally abused (a senior boss was in a political fight with my direct boss, so it wasn't personal to me, but it was vicious and ongoing for many years till I finally quit).
Stand-over tactics by insecure co-workers.
A colleague continually made gay jokes.
Derogatory comments regarding dress or appearance. Unnecessary interrogation or criticism on work product.
Being taken advantage of my non-confrontational behavior and assign a work task that most team members do not want to do it.
One of the female staff enjoys playing dirty jokes on a male staff, nearly everyday.
Being painted as incompetent when the bully did not agree with my decision. The bully would write rude e-mails to challenge me. He would cc his own boss to highlight my "incompetence" to senior management.

Table 2

<b>DESCRIPTIONS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING</b>
Verbal attacks such as derogatory jokes, assaults, sexual harassment or other sorts of behaviors that would potentially cause psychological distress.
Name calling" and "people being segregated"
Verbal & physical abuse, denial of opportunities, ostracization from social events.
The belittling of another person through use of power, be it sexual, authoritative or praying on a personal or physical attributes.
Name calling, physical or mental abuse.
Making fun of people for their personal behaviour or habits.
Verbal insult, unfriendly body gesture and symbol and physical attack.
Homophobic or racist comments directed at any individual or group. I think it happens through humor a lot more than it should.
Verbally abuse, sexual harassment, physical abuse etc.
Any kind of verbal or physical harassment based on race, sex or sexual orientation.
Impossible tasks, setting the employee up to fail, refusing to listen to an employee's concerns, withholding promotion or contract renewal.
Causing in another employee a feeling of fear.
Inappropriate name calling, intimidation, or outright bullying (semi-violent behavior).
Any concerted group behaviour deliberately aimed at making those in the minority feel excluded. The sense of being shut out from a dominant segment of co-workers can be as damaging as more provocative behaviour such as insults, racial epithets or abuse directed at perceived differences in sexual orientation.
Intimidation physical or emotional/mental, discrimination for jobs or promotion, isolation.
Laugh and make bad jokes about sexual orientation. Bad mouth, black mail.
Discriminatory words, insults, rejection, exclusion from events or social circles
Intimidation, whether physical or psychological, especially by those in positions of greater influence.
Patterns of unwillingness to collaborate when the business case to do so is there, or the leadership's "generally understood" direction is disregarded in the face of collaboration.
Mainly hurting other people's feelings, but also manipulating / affecting others unrelated to better job performance, or in some in case unrelated to work. Racist/sexist/gender related remarks are also forms of bullying



Table 3a

<b>NAQ Bullying Behaviours</b>	<b>Identified Behaviours Per Pre-Research Survey</b>
1) Someone withholding information which affects your performance.	<b>Tactics used by insecure colleagues.</b>
2) Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work.	<b>Being humiliated in connection with work and belittling.</b>
3) Being ordered to do work below your level of competence.	<b>To perform work below own level of competence and be given tasks that are set to fail.</b>
4) Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks.	<b>Assigned work no one wants to do.</b>
5) Spreading of gossip and rumours about you.	
6) Being ignored, excluded or being 'sent to Coventry'.	<b>Being ignored or ostracized.</b>
7) Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life.	<b>Derogatory comments on physical appearance, backgrounds and private life.</b>
8) Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage).	
9) Intimidating behaviour such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way.	<b>Threats, verbal abuse and intimidation.</b>
10) Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job.	



Table 3b

<b>NAQ Bullying Behaviours</b>	<b>Identified Behaviours Per Pre-Research Survey</b>
11) Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes.	
12) Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	
13) Persistent criticism of your work and effort	<b>Interrogation and persistent criticisms of work.</b>
14) Having your opinions and views ignored	<b>Having views being ignored.</b>
15) Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with	<b>Subjected to practical jokes.</b>
16) Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines	
17) Having allegations made against you	
18) Excessive monitoring of your work	
19) Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)	
20) Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	<b>Being the subject of constant teasing.</b>
21) Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	
22) Threats of violence or physical abuse or actual abuse	<b>Threats, verbal abuse and intimidation. Physical and sexual harassment.</b>

## Appendix 9

Table 4a

What do you think victims should do when they are being bullied in the workplace?	What do you think organizations should do to prevent bullying in the workplace?	Should there be a legislation to deal with bullying in the workplace?
Tell their manager or if it's the manager that's the problem someone higher.	Zero tolerance and formal processes of complaint and investigation.	Yes.
Seek assistance from supervisors and/or stand up for oneself and talk to the bullies directly.	Education Through role play or drama to demonstrate the potential psychological repercussions have on the victims.  Set clear rules and regulations outlining the criteria of bullying and the it's consequences on the bully (e.g. Being fired from the company)	Yes.
Seek assistance from supervisors and/or stand up for oneself and talk to the bullies directly.	Increase engagement of individuals.  Tell people from day one that it is unacceptable	Yes.
Confront. Tell senior management.	Educate managers.	No.
Stand up for themselves.	Publicize what is bullying because most people aren't even aware. We have all become so de-sensitized to bullying that we don't even recognize when it's happening to ourselves.	Absolutely! This will be the first step in informing the public about what it is, and that it's wrong.

Appendix 10

Table 4b

What do you think victims should do when they are being bullied in the workplace?	What do you think organizations should do to prevent bullying in the workplace?	Should there be a legislation to deal with bullying in the workplace?
Point out that this isn't an appropriate way to behave and let the HRD know.	No tolerance policy of any form of bullying.	Yes with heavy fines and possible jail.
Complain to superiors.	Ensure it is clear 'from the top' that it is not to be tolerated and that diversity of all employees is essential to a successful business.	Yes. This will provide protection and a clear avenue for both the bullied and their HR department.
Seek assistance of peers if possible, management and if none of these are suitable, HR for guidance.  If neither of these work, a charity or NGO should be available to assist with the psychological side.	Hiring Policy should drive a diversity requirement to ensure a broad cross section of skills, personalities and cultures in the office.  Leadership and HR must lead by example through training, confidential support networks (Internal and external), partnership/sponsorship with relevant community organisations  Take a hard line stance on individuals known to bully through training and if necessary termination of employment.	Yes absolutely.....in some western countries there are govt appointed bodies established to provide impartial support to employees along side Trade Unions who will represent individuals in cases of mistreatment, unfair dismissal etc.

Appendix 11

Table 4c

What do you think victims should do when they are being bullied in the workplace?	What do you think organizations should do to prevent bullying in the workplace?	Should there be a legislation to deal with bullying in the workplace?
<p>Hard to say as every person is different as is the culture and support network in every country....for some they can stand up to that person directly or have line management/leadership who would support them.</p> <p>For those less fortunate the need to have external mentors and support groups with whom they can engage for advice, strength and possible direct interaction with the named parties would be more suitable</p>	<p>Provide educational events and a focus on diversity and inclusion.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Speak to their line manager, senior leader or Human Resources team.</p>	<p>Discuss possible problems in advance.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>Laugh, make a joke about it, or ignore it.</p>	<p>Show friendly gesture to welcome to talk to the concerned personnel with highly confidentiality.</p> <p>Policy on bully is no tolerate.</p> <p>Sensitive training to employees.</p>	<p>Yes, but it is hard as the definition need to be clear and action taken to stop bullying need to be specific.</p>
<p>Don't withdraw. staring the bullier, voice out and tell the person to stop.</p>	<p>Educate, educate, educate. It is also about creating an environment in which leadership allows open discussions about such problems to take place.</p>	<p>Note informed enough to comment, but in theory, yes.</p>

# Appendix 12

Table 4d

What do you think victims should do when they are being bullied in the workplace?	What do you think organizations should do to prevent bullying in the workplace?	Should there be a legislation to deal with bullying in the workplace?
Speak out, although sometimes it is very difficult to have the bullying acknowledged.	Be clear about their policies around bullying, and have a clear definition that includes the ability to by the person who is bullying to wield institutional or other sorts of power over the one they are victimising.  They should then take this policy seriously when complaints are made, and subject these to analysis about the validity of the claims, and the actual harm being suffered.	Maybe, but it would be much harder to frame than a workplace only policy.
Whistleblowers hotlines help but often they are HR staff with little or no training.	Zero tolerance helps.	Yes.
Speak to the boss about it, I suppose? If it's the boss who is bullying you, I guess one has to decide to quit the job.	As with anywhere else, I can't see that there is much one can do, except rely on others to help you and others to discourage the bullying parties.	I don't really comprehend the bullying, or the difference between bullying in the workplace versus bullying anywhere else.
Report to the managers or police office directly.	Education, the upper managers should show support to inclusiveness.	Sure.
Approach their direct supervisor or the relevant HR department.	Education through seminars; setting personal example; zero tolerance	Yes.
Look for another job.	Insist on training for managers	Yes.

Appendix 13

Table 4e

What do you think victims should do when they are being bullied in the workplace?	What do you think organizations should do to prevent bullying in the workplace?	Should there be a legislation to deal with bullying in the workplace?
Report to the managers or police office directly.	Education, the upper managers should show support to inclusiveness.	Sure.
Report to the managers or police office directly.	Education, the upper managers should show support to inclusiveness.	Sure.
Approach their direct supervisor or the relevant HR department.	Education through seminars; setting personal example; zero tolerance	Yes.
Look for another job.	Insist on training for managers	Yes.
Ideally, they should confront the bully. However, this is probably not an avenue the bullied may feel comfortable with - and it's useful to have a third party to help judge the situation. It might not be bullying, or the victim may be unsure whether it is.	Include anti-bullying education in HR programs and actively create an atmosphere of inclusion, as well as make it clear bullying is not to be tolerated.	Don't think it is practical.
Who knows - quit is the only real response to serious bullying as rarely will it be dealt with by an organization.	They need a true outside mediator who people can go to, one with real power to take corrective action (kind of like a court system).	Yes.
Make a big noise about it to everyone in sight.	Realise that it exists and follow up if there is a case. People forget about verbal abuse and cyber bullying or just overlook it. "I don't want to make a fuss."	Yes absolutely!

# Appendix 14

Table 4f

What do you think victims should do when they are being bullied in the workplace?	What do you think organizations should do to prevent bullying in the workplace?	Should there be a legislation to deal with bullying in the workplace?
Speak to their immediate bosses and their local HR representative.	Spend time in workplace education, informational meetings to acquaint employees with bullying and its prevalence.	Only as a last resort, when it is evident that management is failing to eliminate the practice.
They should have the courage to confront the bullies and challenge them to explain their discriminatory behaviour.	The management should seek a clearer understanding of why such bullying occurs and should make it clear that it will not be tolerated.	I would say that is not necessary.
Be free to raise the issue with their supervisor and HR, without fear of retribution.	Strong culture of diversity and inclusion, including strong message from top down - with policies in place which explicitly prohibits bullying.	Sure.
Raise their complaint to an independent and trusted support area such as HR, potentially leave the employer.	Adopt a zero tolerance, well communicated policy and complaint system. Train managers to monitor and report such cases.	Yes, although most employees will not want to resort to taking legal action.
Confront their bully and tell a supervisor.	Explain that it's unacceptable and then act on infractions.	Yes.
Report to someone unconnected with those involved.	Organisations need to have clear policies on their books which is backed up by action.	Yes.
If the bully act enables one to expand your repertoire of knowledge and skills, then take it as a challenge. If the bullying act is of hurt of self and/or others, stand up for what you believe and defend.	Carrot - encourage collaboration, caring for self and others, team work, be respectful, etc.  Stick - governance and penalised bully behavior.	Yes. Not just for sexual preference but for any reason.



Appendix 15

Table 4g

What do you think victims should do when they are being bullied in the workplace?	What do you think organizations should do to prevent bullying in the workplace?	Should there be a legislation to deal with bullying in the workplace?
Talk to boss, HR, diversity.	Implement HR policies, education/training, contact person for support. Support senior management. Straight allies.	Hmm.... It may be difficult to define and justify. If possible, I think this is good.
Respectfully speak directly to the bully. If that doesn't work, communicate the issue to their boss or to Human Resources.	Create an open culture where issues can be reported. Discipline any reported bullies.	Not sure if legislation helps. Education first. Bullies do not necessarily realize they are one.
It is difficult but may need to report to supervisor or external resources for handling if needed.	Offer external hotlines so that the bullied staff can feel safe when reporting the case.	Yes.
Inform own boss and confront the bully directly.	3 prong approach :  1. Getting victims to open up - people need to feel safe who/where to go to.  2. Building victims' confidence to take charge - victims should be coached into taking appropriate actions to help themselves.  3. Deal with the bully - from informal to formal warning letters.	Not optimistic this can be effective, but perhaps if the legislation mandated policies against such?



Appendix16

Table 4h

What do you think victims should do when they are being bullied in the workplace?	What do you think organizations should do to prevent bullying in the workplace?	Should there be a legislation to deal with bullying in the workplace?
Depends on the relationship with the offender. Either directly confront the offender with logic and clarity, without emotion; or report to superiors. Generally direct engagement is the best starting point.	A written and well-enforced Equal Opportunities Policy with specifics about bullying, discrimination and intimidation.	Yes, for sure. Hong Kong is pretty bad at that, there are much more other discrimination laws in the UK and EU.
Find an ally in the leadership ranks to explain and understand the situation, and identify the possible drivers. Also to seek advice on how and who to report to.	Open gestures of inclusion by leadership- speaking out for minority concerns such as LGBT equality, hiring handicapped persons and measuring the amount of diversity in the workforce (percent male/ female, number of languages spoken, etc.).	
Speak out to the person bullying (though will be hard if your own boss).  Report to HR/Management.	Better brief/prepare all new employees on what they can do and how to face someone should they be bullied, and always offer a point of contact for staff to contact and report to, should this happen in the work place. Yearly reminders to existing staff/employers on legislations or about bullying, so it acts as a reminder (not to bully, or at least think twice before doing so).	

Appendix 17

Table 5a

Do you think bullying in the workplace is a phenomenon that occurs outside of Asia?	Please elaborate why you think workplace bullying is a phenomenon that occurs outside of Asia.	Please elaborate why you think workplace bullying is a phenomenon that is prevalent in Asia.
Yes.	I think it is a worldwide workplace issue. The pressure of work and family make many people angry and they take that anger and frustration out on colleagues and other workers.	NA.
No.	NA.	NA.
Yes.	I think it is not just a racial thing.	NA.
Yes.	My experience of it was outside Asia.	NA.
Yes.	It happens all over the world!	NA.
Yes.	Unfortunately, it is human nature dating back to Cain & Abel times	NA.
Yes.	Bullying in all forms, in and out of the workplace, is a human trait to exhibit dominance. It is only logical to assume (and I am aware that this is the case) that it occurs in various forms globally. Through education and support, this negative trait can be eradicated.	NA.
Yes.	Personality dictates bullying but is further enhanced in cultures where education and accountability for such actions are not legislated. In this way countries outside Asia (excl. Aus and NZ) are more likely to have bullying but it is not restrictive to Asia.	NA.

Appendix 18

Table 5b

Do you think bullying in the workplace is a phenomenon that occurs outside of Asia?	Please elaborate why you think workplace bullying is a phenomenon that occurs outside of Asia.	Please elaborate why you think workplace bullying is a phenomenon that is prevalent in Asia.
No.	I have lived and worked internationally and whilst I have not been a victim of abuse personally I have observed it and seen it written about in other locations (Europe, USA and Middle East).	NA.
Yes.	People are people and similar despite nationality. Some societies encourage making fun of others.	NA.
Yes.	I see big different in culture when it comes to culture in workplace bullying	NA.
Yes.	From my time working in the United States, I have witnessed it first-hand.	NA.
Yes.	I have worked in other countries beyond Asia, as seen it happen!	NA.
Yes.	Surely you must be joking. It is a global phenomenon.	
No.	NA.	I doubt that it is any more or less prevalent in Asia than anywhere else.
Yes.	Bullying is everywhere.	NA.
No.	NA.	Ignorance; lack of awareness on the affected person.
Yes.	It occurs everywhere.	NA.
Yes.	It's an ugly side of human nature.	NA.
Yes.	I have experienced it outside of Asia.	NA.
Yes.	Human nature. There are bullies everywhere.	NA.

Appendix 19

Table 5c

Do you think bullying in the workplace is a phenomenon that occurs outside of Asia?	Please elaborate why you think workplace bullying is a phenomenon that occurs outside of Asia.	Please elaborate why you think workplace bullying is a phenomenon that is prevalent in Asia.
Yes.	It sometimes seems like a cultural phenomenon and I have seen it.	NA.
Yes.	I have observed it in numerous situations elsewhere, not least in military service. It's a worldwide phenomenon.	NA.
Yes.	A review of media sources demonstrates that it is.	NA.
Yes.	I have seen it to be more overtly prevalent in the US and Europe.	NA.
Yes.	Because I was bullied in my workplace in the States.	NA.
Yes.	First-hand experience.	NA.
Yes.	It could have started from the master and slave era.	NA.
Yes.	More open culture and free speech/opinion.	NA.
No.	NA.	I think it occurs everywhere.  In relation to sexual preference I think it is more of an issue in Asia because some Asian societies are very conservative and are yet even to acknowledge the existence of the LGBT community.

Appendix 20

Table 5d

Do you think bullying in the workplace is a phenomenon that occurs outside of Asia?	Please elaborate why you think workplace bullying is a phenomenon that occurs outside of Asia.	Please elaborate why you think workplace bullying is a phenomenon that is prevalent in Asia.
Yes.	Bullying can happen anywhere when there is people. It just depends on the severeness and frequency.	NA.
No.	NA.	Asians are more likely to leave the organization than confront the oppressor.
Yes.	It is a fact of corporate politics that there will always be less secure, less mature individuals who hope to subdue others in this crude fashion.	NA.
Yes.	Places of work have many similarities across geographies. Generally speaking, organizations consists of mini-fiefdoms, and leaders often give the hardest time to the marginalized sectors of society to maintain these.	NA.
Yes.	<p>People / staff are afraid to speak up</p> <p>The HK culture itself - no benchmark with neighbouring countries in Asia to compare this against (think China, it's even worse)</p> <p>The laws in HK do not protect employees or support employees to speak up.</p> <p>People are so afraid of losing their jobs in HK, they rather not report and get along with their jobs (employers also know this)</p> <p>It's not just bullying, expats also act quite different in HK, they too most probably do and say things in the workplace in HK, they will never consider in the UK/US as they know they won't get away with it back home.</p>	NA.

Letter to Participants (Pilot Study)

Dear,

I am writing to ask for your help. I am presently doing my PhD with Birkbeck, University of London. I would like to invite you to participate in my PhD research. The focus of my research is on the negative acts people have encountered at work. You will be asked to answer a questionnaire which will take about 10 minutes.

Please be assured that all data collected for this research will be kept confidential and anonymised. Should you choose to cease your participation in this research, kindly contact me at either this email [ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk)

This research has been approved by Department of Organizational Psychology Ethics Committee at Birkbeck, University of London. All information collected will be used strictly for the research and all data will be anonymized.

Should you have any concerns or queries with regards to the research, please contact me by email [ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk) or phone +852 69774699

Thank you

Austin Aloysius Tay Chye Thiam

2<sup>nd</sup> Correspondence

Dear,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my PhD research study. Please find attached herewith a consent form that delineates the purpose of the research, how the data will be collected, used and presented. Kindly sign and return the consent form to me. A link will then be sent for you to complete an online questionnaire.

After you have completed the questionnaire, a debrief session will be arranged. Please note that any data collected are solely used for this research. You have all rights to withdraw at any time and can request for your data to be excluded in the research.

Once again, thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study.

Austin Aloysius Tay Chye Thiam



Dear ,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. The following questionnaire is part one of a two-part research. Please note that all information collected will be used only for this research.

Please note that in the following page, there will be an informed consent form and details about the questionnaire.

Yours sincerely,

Austin Tay Chye Thiam  
PhD Student  
Email : ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk  
tel: +852 69774699

Should you require clarifications or have any questions pertaining to this research you can contact my supervisor below

Dr Andreas Liefoghe  
Department of Organizational Psychology  
Birkbeck, University of London  
Malet Street, Bloomsbury  
London WC1E 7HX  
tel: +44 (0) 207 631 6747  
fax: +44 (0) 207 631 6750  
email: a.liefoghe@bbk.ac.uk





## **INFORMED CONSENT**

### **Introduction**

This questionnaire seeks to look at how people react to negative acts at work. This questionnaire is part one of a two-part research. Those who are randomly chosen to participate in the second part of the research will be notified via email by the researcher.

### **Procedures**

Before you complete the questionnaire, you will be asked to provide some personal information. All data collected will be strictly used for this research only. The questionnaire consists of 36 questions and will take approximately 20 minutes or less to complete. You will be debriefed after you have completed the questionnaire.

### **Confidentiality**

All data collected will be statistically analyzed and presented in an aggregate format as part of the research thesis. Data will be coded, anonymized to ensure confidentiality and only be accessible to the primary researcher and his supervisor.

### **Participation**

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime. You will also have the right to request for data collected from you to be withdrawn from the research.

If you desire to withdraw, please notify the principal researcher at this email: [ctav01@mail.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:ctav01@mail.bbk.ac.uk) or at tel: +85269774699

### **Questions about the Research**

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Austin Tay, at tel: +852 69774699 or email : [ctav01@mail.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:ctav01@mail.bbk.ac.uk) or Dr Andreas Liefoghe, Supervisor, tel: +44 (0) 207 631 6747 or email: [a.liefoghe@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:a.liefoghe@bbk.ac.uk)

I have read, understood and have a copy of the consent form and it is the desire of my own free will that I decide to participate in this research.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Copy

Debrief

Dear,

Thanks for completing the questionnaire.

The purpose of asking you to do the questionnaire was meant to be a pilot study. That is to determine whether the questionnaire used will be suitable for the research.

The questionnaire is a combination of both Negative Acts Questionnaire, Revised (NAQ-R) and the Work-Related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ).

My research focus is on the use of Acceptance Commitment Therapy as a coping strategy for those who experience workplace bullying, that is the emotions and thoughts (such as stress, not feeling good enough, fear that results to behaviours like counterproductive work behaviour, absenteeism and demotivation).

While the therapy is not meant to stop the bullying, it is used to help individuals to be able to use the six interactive processes within the therapy: (Cognitive Delusion, Acceptance, Contact with the present moment, Self as context, Values and Committed Actions) to become psychological flexible so that they can manoeuvre around the thoughts that transpire from the exposure to workplace bullying.

The research comprises two parts, the questionnaire that you have done and then those who have shown to have experienced workplace bullying (according to the scores classification for NAQ-R) will then be randomly chosen to either have the intervention training (ACT) or not. Those who are selected for the ACT intervention will go through 3 sessions (1st and 2nd sessions done consecutively) and the third session three months later (this will also include an interview session that might be recorded for verification purposes). The participants will then be asked to fill in the questionnaire again. The results will be compared pre and post intervention to determine the effect of ACT. In all sessions, participants will be asked for their consent for their participation, and also they will have the right to withdraw from the research. They will also be able to withdraw their data to be included in the thesis.

As for your data, please be assured that your email address will not be used in this instance apart from this debrief. Other biodata collected will be anonymised and will be statistically analysed and presented in the thesis.

I hope the above explanation has given you an idea of my research and should you have any further concerns that require clarifications, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards

Austin Aloysius Tay Chye Thiam

PILOT STUDY



Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. The following questionnaire is part one of a two-part research. Please note that all information collected will be used only for this research.

The following pages will include an informed consent form, questions to collect personal information and the actual questionnaire. Please read the instructions carefully and answer all questions as truthful as you can.

Austin Tay Chye Thiam  
PhD Student  
Email : ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk  
tel: +852 69774699

Should you require clarifications or have any questions pertaining to this research you can contact my supervisor below

Dr Andreas Liefoghe  
Department of Organizational Psychology  
Birkbeck, University of London  
Malet Street, Bloomsbury  
London WC1E 7HX tel: +44 (0) 207 631 6747  
fax: +44 (0) 207 631 6750  
email: a.liefoghe@bbk.ac.uk

## **INFORMED CONSENT**

### **Introduction**

This questionnaire seeks to look at negative acts people encounter at work. This questionnaire is part one of a two-part research. Those who are randomly chosen to participate in the second part of the research will be notified via email by the researcher.

### **Procedures**

You will be asked to complete some information about yourself. All data collected will be strictly used for this research only. The questionnaire consists of 32 questions and will take approximately 20 minutes or less to complete. You will be debriefed after you have completed the questionnaire.

### **Confidentiality**

All data collected will be statistically analyzed and presented in an aggregate format as part of the research thesis. Data will be coded, anonymize to ensure confidentiality and only be accessible to the primary researcher and his supervisor.

### **Participation**

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime. You will also have the right to request for data collected from you to be withdrawn from the research.

If you desire to withdraw, please notify the principal researcher at this email: ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk or at tel: +85269774699

### **Questions about the Research**

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Austin Tay, at tel: +852 69774699 or email : ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk or Dr Andreas Liefoghe, Supervisor, tel: +44 (0) 207 631 6747 or email: a.liefoghe@bbk.ac.uk

I have read, understood and have a copy of the consent form and it is the desire of my own free will that I decide to participate in this research.

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

**Please fill in the following questions. All information collected will only be used for the purpose of this research. All personal information will not be accessed by, disclosed to and shared with any other persons.**

☐ Name (1) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Email (2) \_\_\_\_\_

What is your gender?

☐ Male (1)

☐ Female (2)

What is your current age?

☐ 24 - 35 (1)

☐ 36 - 45 (2)

☐ 46 - 55 (3)

☐ 56 and above (4)

In which industry are you currently employed?

\_\_\_\_\_

Please fill the following

☐ Position (1) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Years in the position (2) \_\_\_\_\_

The following behaviors are often seen as examples of negative behavior in the workplace.

Over the past 6 months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts at work?

	Never (1)	Now and Then (2)	Monthly (3)	Weekly (4)	Daily (5)
Someone withholding information which affects your performance (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being ordered to do work below your level of competence (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spreading of gossip and rumors about your (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being ignored, excluded or being 'Sent to Coventry' (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life (7)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage) (8)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Intimidating behavior such as finger-pointing, invasions of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way (9)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job (10)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes (11)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach (12)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Persistent criticism of your work and effort (13)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Having your  
opinions and  
views ignored  
(14)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Practical jokes  
carried out by  
people you  
don't get on  
with (15)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Being given  
tasks with  
unreasonable  
or impossible  
targets or  
deadlines (16)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Having  
allegations  
made against  
you (17)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Excessive  
monitoring of  
our work (18)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Pressure not to  
claim  
something  
which by right  
you are  
entitled to (.e.g.  
sick leave,  
holiday  
entitlement,  
travel  
expenses) (19)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------



Being the  
subject of  
excessive  
teasing and  
sarcasm (20)

☐☐☐☐☐

Being exposed  
to an  
unmanageable  
workload (21)

☐☐☐☐☐

Threats of  
violence or  
physical abuse  
or actual abuse  
(22)

☐☐☐☐☐

Below you will find a list of statements. Please rate how true each statement is for you.

	Never True (1)	Very Seldom True (2)	Seldom True (3)	Sometimes True (4)	Frequently True (5)	Almost Always True (6)	Always True (7)
I am able to work effectively in spite of any personal worries that I have (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can admit to my mistakes at work and still be successful (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can still work very effectively, even if I am nervous about something (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worries do not get in the way of my success (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can perform as required, no matter how I feel (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can work effectively,	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

even  
when I  
doubt  
myself (6)

My  
thoughts  
and  
feelings  
do not get  
in the way  
of my  
work (7)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Some people experience or explain their perspective of bullying in the workplace as:

***a situation where one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions***

Using the above definition, please state below whether you have experienced negative acts at work over the last 6 months?

	No (1)	Yes, but only rarely (2)	Yes, now and then (3)	Yes, several times per week (4)	Yes, almost daily (5)
Have you witnessed such behaviour? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has this happened to you personally? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you done this to others? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

1. How did you find the whole process? (For e.g. time taken to complete the questionnaire; did you have difficulties accessing the questionnaire?)

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2. Did you encounter any difficulties answering the questionnaire? (For e.g. were there questions that you did not understand?)

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3. Were there any concerns you might have with the questionnaire or the whole process? (For e.g. issues about confidentiality)

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Q14 Other comments?

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Appendix 26

Table 6a

Q1. How did you find the whole process? (For e.g. time taken to complete the questionnaire; did you have difficulties accessing the questionnaire?)	Q2. Did you encounter any difficulties answering the questionnaire? (For e.g. were there questions that you did not understand?)	Q3. Were there any concerns you might have with the questionnaire or the whole process? (For e.g. issues about confidentiality)	Q4. Other comments?
Very easy to access. Only the agreement it's a bit hard to do especially when u don't have smartphone..but overall its ok.	No.	No, for the confidentiality, I believe in you.	No.
No.	No.	No.	No.
It was all good.	No problems encountered.	Filling in the name and email address did raise my concern about confidentiality. I know the researcher personally, so that's okay. Can't say the same for those who do not know the researcher.	No.
The questionnaire is straightforward and the interface is easy to navigate.	The content of the questionnaire is fine. it was just slightly inconvenient to have to scroll horizontally to use the positive ratings for the scale, however this might be an issue with my browser instead of the survey.	No.	No.

Table 6b

Q1. How did you find the whole process? (For e.g. time taken to complete the questionnaire; did you have difficulties accessing the questionnaire?)	Q2. Did you encounter any difficulties answering the questionnaire? (For e.g. were there questions that you did not understand?)	Q3. Were there any concerns you might have with the questionnaire or the whole process? (For e.g. issues about confidentiality)	Q4. Other comments?
No.	No.	Perhaps question around whether there is an approach to separate personal information and questionnaire responses.	No.
The process is easy. I could not fill in the consent form online so scanned and emailed it.	No.	None.	Thank you for including me! You might want to look at the wording at the head of the page. Your definition is of bullying, but then you ask for experience of negative acts.
It's ok.	No.	No.	No.
It's pretty good, the questions are straightforward and generally easy to answer.	For some statements, they did take some time to really assess my own situation.	No.	It actually takes less than 20 minutes.

### Negative Acts Questionnaire

The following behaviours are often seen as examples of negative behaviour in the workplace. Over the last six months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts at work?

*Please circle the number that best corresponds with your experience over the last six months:*

	1 Never	2 Now and then	3 Monthly	4 Weekly	5 Daily
1) Someone withholding information which affects your performance	1	2	3	4	5
2) Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	1	2	3	4	5
3) Being ordered to do work below your level of competence	1	2	3	4	5
4) Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	1	2	3	4	5
5) Spreading of gossip and rumours about you	1	2	3	4	5
6) Being ignored, excluded or being 'sent to Coventry'	1	2	3	4	5
7) Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life	1	2	3	4	5
8) Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)	1	2	3	4	5
9) Intimidating behaviour such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way	1	2	3	4	5
10) Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	1	2	3	4	5
11) Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	1	2	3	4	5
12) Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	1	2	3	4	5
13) Persistent criticism of your work and effort	1	2	3	4	5
14) Having your opinions and views ignored	1	2	3	4	5
15) Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with	1	2	3	4	5
16) Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines	1	2	3	4	5
17) Having allegations made against you	1	2	3	4	5
18) Excessive monitoring of your work	1	2	3	4	5
19) Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)	1	2	3	4	5
20) Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	1	2	3	4	5
21) Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	1	2	3	4	5
22) Threats of violence or physical abuse or actual abuse	1	2	3	4	5

23. *Have you been bullied at work? We define bullying as a situation where one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions. We will not refer to a one-off incident as bullying.*

Using the above definition, please state whether you have been bullied at work over the last six months?

- No (continue at question ?) ☐
- Yes, but only rarely ☐
- Yes, now and then ☐
- Yes several times per week ☐
- Yes, almost daily ☐



ACTUAL STUDY



Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. The following questionnaire is part one of a two-part research. Please note that all information collected will be used only for this research. It has received ethical approval from the Department of Organizational Psychology Ethics Committee at Birkbeck, University of London.

Please note that in the following page, there will be an informed consent form and details about the questionnaire.

Yours sincerely,

Austin Tay Chye Thiam  
PhD Student  
Email : ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk  
Tel: +852 69774699

Should you require clarifications or have any questions pertaining to this research you can contact my supervisor below

Dr Andreas Liefoghe  
Department of Organizational Psychology  
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Tel: +44 (0) 207 631 6747  
Fax: +44(0) 207 631 6750

## **INFORMED CONSENT**

### **Introduction**

This questionnaire seeks to look at negative acts people encounter at work. This questionnaire is part one of a two-part research. Those who are randomly chosen to participate in the second part of the research will be notified via email by the researcher.

### **Procedures**

You will be asked to complete some information about yourself. All data collected will be strictly used for this research only. The questionnaire consists of 32 questions and will take approximately 20 minutes or less to complete. You will be debriefed after you have completed the questionnaire.

### **Confidentiality**

All data collected will be statistically analyzed and presented in an aggregate format as part of the research thesis. Data will be coded, anonymize to ensure confidentiality and only be accessible to the primary researcher and his supervisor.

### **Participation**

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime. You will also have the right to request for data collected from you to be withdrawn from the research.

If you desire to withdraw, please notify the principal researcher at this email: ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk or at tel: +85269774699

### **Questions about the Research**

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Austin Tay, at tel: +852 69774699 or email : ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk or Dr Andreas Liefoghe, Supervisor, tel: +44 (0) 207 631 6747 or email: a.liefoghe@bbk.ac.uk

I have read, understood and have a copy of the consent form and it is the desire of my own free will that I decide to participate in this research.

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

**Please fill in the following questions. All information collected will only be used for the purpose of this research. All personal information will not be accessed by, disclosed to and shared with any other persons.**

☐ Name (1) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Email (2) \_\_\_\_\_

What is your gender?

☐ Male (1)

☐ Female (2)

What is your current age?

☐ 24 - 35 (1)

☐ 36 - 45 (2)

☐ 46 - 55 (3)

☐ 56 and above (4)

In which industry are you currently employed?

\_\_\_\_\_

Please fill the following

☐ Position (1) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Years in the position (2) \_\_\_\_\_

The following behaviors are often seen as examples of negative behavior in the workplace.

Over the past 6 months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts at work?

	Never (1)	Now and Then (2)	Monthly (3)	Weekly (4)	Daily (5)
Someone withholding information which affects your performance (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being ordered to do work below your level of competence (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spreading of gossip and rumors about your (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being ignored, excluded or being 'Sent to Coventry' (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life (7)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage) (8)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Intimidating behavior such as finger-pointing, invasions of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way (9)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job (10)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes (11)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach (12)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Persistent criticism of your work and effort (13)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Having your  
opinions and  
views ignored  
(14)

☐☐☐☐☐

Practical jokes  
carried out by  
people you  
don't get on  
with (15)

☐☐☐☐☐

Being given  
tasks with  
unreasonable  
or impossible  
targets or  
deadlines (16)

☐☐☐☐☐

Having  
allegations  
made against  
you (17)

☐☐☐☐☐

Excessive  
monitoring of  
our work (18)

☐☐☐☐☐

Pressure not to  
claim  
something  
which by right  
your are  
entitled to (.e.g.  
sick leave,  
holiday  
entitlement,  
travel  
expenses) (19)

☐☐☐☐☐

Being the  
subject of  
excessive  
teasing and  
sarcasm (20)

☐☐☐☐☐

Being exposed  
to an  
unmanageable  
workload (21)

☐☐☐☐☐

Threats of  
violence or  
physical abuse  
or actual abuse  
(22)

☐☐☐☐☐

Below you will find a list of statements. Please rate how true each statement is for you.

	Never True (1)	Very Seldom True (2)	Seldom True (3)	Sometimes True (4)	Frequently True (5)	Almost Always True (6)	Always True (7)
I am able to work effectively in spite of any personal worries that I have (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can admit to my mistakes at work and still be successful (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can still work very effectively, even if I am nervous about something (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worries do not get in the way of my success (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can perform as required, no matter how I feel (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



I can work effectively, even when I doubt myself (6)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

My thoughts and feelings do not get in the way of my work (7)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Some people experience or explain their perspective of bullying in the workplace as:

***a situation where one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions***

Using the above definition, please state below whether you have experienced negative acts at work over the last 6 months?

	No (1)	Yes, but only rarely (2)	Yes, now and then (3)	Yes, several times per week (4)	Yes, almost daily (5)
Have you witnessed such behaviour? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has this happened to you personally? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you done this to others? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## ACTUAL STUDY – CHINESE VERSION



感谢您同意参与本项研究。以下调查问卷是研究的前半部分。敬请知悉，所收集的全部信息仅为本研究使用。本研究已经通过伦敦大学伯贝克学院组织心理学系道德委员会的伦理审批。敬请留意查看下页中的《知情同意书》及调查问卷详细内容。

谨启

Austin Tay Chye Thiam

博士生

电邮: ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk

电话: +852 69774699 若您对本项研究有任何需要阐明之处或任何疑问，可通过以下方式与本人导师联系。 Andreas Liefoghe 博士

组织心理学系

伦敦大学伯贝克学院

Malet Street, Bloomsbury

London WC1E 7HX

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### 知情同意书

#### 介绍

本调查问卷旨在了解人们对工作场所负向行为的反应。相关研究共两部分，本调查问卷为前半部分。经由随机抽取后，参与后半部分研究的参与者将收到研究员的邮件通知。 过程

填写调查问卷前，您需要先提供部分个人信息。所收集的全部信息严格仅为本研究使用。调查问卷共有 32 道问题，作答时间约为 20 分钟以内。完成后，您将听取总结汇报。 保密

所收集的全部数据将经过统计分析，并在整合后呈现在研究论文中。为确保保密性，所有数据将进行匿名编号处理，仅主要研究员及其导师可查阅调用。

#### 参与

本项研究的参与完全自愿。您有权利随时退出，也有权利要求从研究中删除与您相关 若您希

望退出，请致信 [ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk) 或致电+85269774699，通知主任研究员。

与本研究相关的问题

若您对本项研究有任何疑问，可联系 Austin Tay（电话：+852 69774699 或电邮：[ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:ctay01@mail.bbk.ac.uk)）或导师 Andreas Liefoghe 博士（电话：+44 (0) 207 631 6747 或电邮：[a.liefoghe@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:a.liefoghe@bbk.ac.uk)）。

本人已经阅读和了解《知情同意书》内容，并已取得相关副本。本人自愿决定参与本项研究。

- ☐ 同意参与 (3)
- ☐ 不同意参与 (4)

请回答下列问题。所收集的全部信息仅为本研究使用。所有个人信息均不会被调用、披露或分享。

☐ 姓名 (3) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ 电邮 (4) \_\_\_\_\_

您的性别是？

☐ 男 (3)

☐ 女 (4)

您现在的年龄是？

☐ 24 - 35 (1)

☐ 36 - 45 (2)

☐ 46 - 55 (3)

☐ 56 岁及以上 (5)

Q17 您现在受雇于哪个行业

\_\_\_\_\_

Q19 请填写以下内容

☐ 职务 (1) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ 该职务资历年份 (2) \_\_\_\_\_

以下行为通常被视为工作场所负面行为的例子。在过去六个月中，您在工作中多久遭受一次下列负面行为？

	从未 (1)	偶尔 (2)	每月 (3)	每周 (4)	每天 (5)
有人隐瞒信息，从而影响了您的表现 (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
您在工作相关方面遭到羞辱或嘲讽 (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
您被要求完成低于您自身能力水平的工作 (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
主要职责领域被剥夺或被较琐碎或令人不悦的工作任务所取代 (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
散布关于您的闲言碎语或谣言 (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
被忽略、排斥或故意冷落 (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
您个人（即习惯和背景）、态度或私生活遭到侮辱性或攻击性评论 (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
您被他人喝骂，或成为自发性生气（或愤怒）的宣泄对象 (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
指责、侵犯个人空间、推搡、阻挡/阻断他人去路等	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

威慑性行为 (9)					
他人暗示或提示您应该辞职 (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
反复提醒您的过失或错误 (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
您在接近他人时，遭到忽视或收到充满敌意的反应 (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
您的工作和努力不断受到批评 (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
您的各种意见看法被忽视 (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
与您相处不来的人对您进行恶作剧 (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
向您指派目标或限期不合理或不可能的任务 (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
收到各种针对您的指控 (17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
您的工作受到过度监视 (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
迫于压力，不敢争取属于自己的权利（如病假、休假、差旅费等） (19)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
成为被过分戏弄和讽刺的对象 (20)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page 5 of 8

工作量超负荷  
(21)

☐☐☐☐☐

遭到暴力或身体虐待的威胁，或受到实际的虐待 (22)

☐☐☐☐☐

请根据您的实际情况，选择以下若干说法与您的符合程度。

	从来不符合 (1)	极偶然符合 (2)	偶然符合 (3)	有时符合 (4)	经常符合 (5)	几乎完全符合 (6)	完全符合 (7)
即使存在个人担忧，我仍然能够高效工作 (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我能在承认工作中出现的错误的同时又能获得成功 (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
即使对某件事情感到焦虑，我仍然能够高效工作 (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
担忧不会影响我获得成功 (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
无论个人感受如何，我都能按要求完成工作 (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
即使在怀疑自己的时候，我仍然能够高效工作 (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



我的工作  
不会受到  
个人想法  
和感受的  
影响 (7)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

某些人所经历的、或所理解的工作场所负面行为是指以下情况：

在一段持续的时间内，一个或若干个个体认为自己成为一个或若干个他人的负面行为的攻击对象，且在此情况中，受欺凌对象无法对这些行为作出自我防御。

	无 (1)	有，但非常少 (2)	有，偶尔 (3)	有，每周几次 (4)	有，几乎每天 (5)
您是否曾经目睹类似行为？ (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
类似事件是否曾经发生在您身上？ (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
您是否曾经对他人施以类似行为？ (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## LETTER TO ORGANISATIONS

Ms Linda Burgoyne  
Chief Executive Officer  
Matilda Hospital  
41 Mount Kellett Road  
The Peak  
Hong Kong

13 January 2016

Dear Ms Burgoyne,

My name is Austin Tay, I am a Chartered Psychologist, and an HK Registered Industrial Organisational Psychologist. I am presently pursuing my PhD research with Birkbeck, University of London, focusing on the impact of negative acts at work. I am writing to inquire whether your organisation will be interested in participating in my research.

Negative behaviours such as being ignored, information withheld that deter one from being effective at work are some of the examples that can affect an employee and this, in turn, can affect the way they work. Some other impacts include:

For example, research has found that employees who had been exposed to negative acts at work within the last 12 months reported a low level of job satisfaction than those who had not been exposed to such bullying behaviour (Quine, 2001).<sup>1</sup> In another research where half of the Finnish participants who had been subjected to negative acts had considered leaving the workplace. (Vartia, 1993)<sup>2</sup>, and this study confirmed the findings from Rayner (1997),<sup>3</sup> who documented that one of four targets left their jobs. Qualitative studies have shown that emotions such as anger, anxiety, fear, helplessness, distress, and irritability may follow the experience of being bullied (Ayoko, Callan, & Hartel, 2003<sup>4</sup>; Tracy et al., 2006<sup>5</sup>). For example, in an Irish interview study 30 targets of bullying reported high levels of depression and anxiety (O'Moore, Seigne, McGuire, & Smith, 1998<sup>6</sup>), while victims at a University in Great Britain reported high prevalence of shame (Lewis, 2004<sup>7</sup>). Clinical reports have also documented a high prevalence of depression, helplessness, anger, anxiety, and despair

<sup>1</sup> Quine, L. (2001). Workplace bullying in nurses. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 6, 73–84.

<sup>2</sup> Vartia, M. (1993). Psychological harassment (bullying, mobbing) at work. In K. Kauppinen-Toropainen (Ed.), *OECD panel group on women, work and health. National report* (Vol. 6, pp. 149–152). Helsinki, Finland: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

<sup>3</sup> Rayner, C. (1997). The incidence of workplace bullying. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 7, 199–208.

<sup>4</sup> Ayoko, O. B., Callan, V. J., & Hartel, C. E. J. (2003). Workplace conflict, bullying, and counterproductive behaviours. *The International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 11(4), 283–301.

<sup>5</sup> Tracy, S. J., Lutgen-Sandvik, P., & Alberts, J. K. (2006). Nightmares, demons and slaves: Exploring the painful metaphors of workplace bullying. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 20, 148–185.

<sup>6</sup> O'Moore, M., Seigne, E., McGuire, L., & Smith, M. (1998). Victims of workplace bullying in Ireland. *The Irish Journal of Psychology*, 19(2–3), 345–357.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis, D. (2004). Bullying at work: The impact of shame among university and college lecturers. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 32(3), 281–299.

among targets (Leymann, 1990<sup>8</sup>), and such feelings seem to be representative for targets regardless of gender, position, and age (Tracy et al., 2006<sup>9</sup>)

The above shows the consequences of employees who experience negative acts and all these indirectly will also affect the organisation such as high turnover (Hogh et al., 2011)<sup>10</sup> and increase counterproductive work behaviour (Rayner & Keashly, 2004).<sup>11</sup>

This research is thus important as early intervention can prevent employees feeling helpless and eventually leaving the job. From the perspective of an organisation, such intervention means providing assistance to these employees, which makes the organisation a conducive environment to work in. This will also help organisations to design policies to prevent negative acts from occurring.

My research will be conducted in 2 Stages:

#### Stage 1

Participants will be asked to take an online questionnaire. Information collected will be strictly used for research purpose. This include

- 1) Name
- 2) Email Address
- 3) Gender
- 4) Position
- 5) Years in present position
- 6) Age group

\* The above information will be used strictly for communication with the participants should they be chosen to proceed to Stage 2.

\* The participant will be asked for their consent for the use of, retention of, the info before they start the questionnaire.

#### Stage 2

Participants who are chosen to proceed to Stage 2 will have three face-to-face sessions with the researcher. This will be conducted either in a half-day workshop or done in two consecutive weeks and the final session, three months later.

<sup>8</sup> Leymann, H. (1990). Mobbing and psychological terror at workplaces. *Violence and Victims*, 5, 119–126.

<sup>9</sup> Tracy, S. J., Lutgen-Sandvik, P., & Alberts, J. K. (2006). Nightmares, demons and slaves: Exploring the painful metaphors of workplace bullying. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 20, 148–185.

<sup>10</sup> Hogh, A., Hoel, H., & Caneiro (2011). Bullying and employee turnover among healthcare workers- A three-wave prospective study. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 19, 742–751.

<sup>11</sup> Rayner, C., & Keashly, L. (2004) Bullying at work: a perspective from Britain and North America. In: Fox, S. and Spector, P., eds. *Counterproductive work behaviour: investigations of actors and targets* : American Psychological Association, Washington, USA,



1) Session 1 (1.5 hours)

In this session, participants will explore the different ways to cope with the negative acts they faced at work.

2) Session 2 (1.5 hours)

In this session, recap and instructions for practice on coping strategies.

3) Session 3 (1.5 hours)

This session will be conducted three months after the Session 2. In this session, participants will be asked to share their experience in applying the coping strategies. They will also be asked to fill in a short questionnaire.

**Consent**

Participants will need to give their consent to the abovementioned requirements before they partake in the research. The consent form will be sent to the participants in written form via email and they will also be asked again when they start the questionnaire.

**Right to Terminate Participation**

Participants have all rights to terminate their involvement in the research at any stage of the process.

**Confidentiality**

All information collected in the process will be strictly used for the research and will be stored in a secured manner.

Should an intervention is required from the organisation, and information may be shared with the organisation to facilitate the intervention. However, consent will need to be granted by the participant/s before any information is shared.

**Queries**

Should you have any queries, you can contact me at

4F, Hilltop Plaza, 49 Hollywood Road, Central  
Hong Kong

Tel: +852 69774699

Email: [austintay@omnipsi.com](mailto:austintay@omnipsi.com)

Website: [www.omnipsi.com](http://www.omnipsi.com)



**Concerns about the research**

Should you have any concerns with regards to the research, please contact my supervisor,

Dr Andreas Liefoghe  
Department of Organizational Psychology  
Birkbeck, University of London  
Malet Street, Bloomsbury  
London WC1E 7HX  
Tel: +44 (0) 207 631 6747  
Fax: +44 (0) 207 631 6750  
Email: [a.liefoghe@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:a.liefoghe@bbk.ac.uk)

Yours sincerely,

Austin Aloysius Tay  
CSci, CPsychol, Reg. Psychol (I/O Psych), AFBPsS, AFHKPS

Letter to Participants (Actual Research)

Dear,

I am writing to ask for your help. I am presently doing my PhD with Birkbeck, University of London. I would like to invite you to participate in my PhD research. The focus of my research is on the negative acts people have encountered at work.

My research comprises two parts : a questionnaire and a practical component. To access the first part of the research, please click on the link below. For the second part, you will be contacted by me via email separately. Please be assured that all data collected for this research will be kept confidential and anonymised.

Should you choose to cease your participation in either parts of the research, kindly contact me at either this email [austintay@ommipsi.com](mailto:austintay@ommipsi.com).

[https://qlite.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_9ojrJuExANJskaF://qlite.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_9ojrJuExANJskaF](https://qlite.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9ojrJuExANJskaF://qlite.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9ojrJuExANJskaF)

This research has been approved by Department of Organizational Psychology Ethics Committee at Birkbeck, University of London. All information collected will be used strictly for the research and all data will be anonymized.

Should you have any concerns or queries with regards to the research, please contact me by email [austintay@ommipsi.com](mailto:austintay@ommipsi.com) or phone +852 69774699

Thank you

Austin Aloysius Tay Chye Thiam

**ACT Intervention – Procedures**

Flaxman, P.E., Bond, F.W., & Livheim, F. (2013). *The mindful and effective employee. An acceptance & commitment therapy training manual for improving well-being and performance.* New Harbinger Publications Inc. Oakland, CA.

**Session One**

In session one, participants were informed that they would have to attend three sessions of psychological and behavioural skills training. They were told that research had shown that this type of training could help in their psychological wellbeing and would increase their behavioural effectiveness. They were also told that it was important to practise the skills they would be learning in between the sessions as the practice was part of the training. They were given a series of exercises to help them in their skills training. The sessions were conducted in Hong Kong and Singapore to accommodate the participants. They were asked to sign a consent form to acknowledge and agree that they would participate in this part of the research. They were told that all information collected in the sessions would be used predominantly for the research and that they would be anonymised. They were also told that they could at any time withdraw from the research if they chose to do so.

**The Components of the Skills Training**

All participants were briefed on the components of the skills training. With the use of a Two Skills diagram (see Appendix 34), they were briefed about the relationship between mindfulness skills training and values-based actions.

The participants were told that both mindfulness and values-based actions worked together. They were told that in the three sessions they would learn mindfulness exercises and would be putting them into practice as part of their home assignments. They were also told that after each session they would be given home assignments to be completed before the next session.

**Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 mins)**

To create awareness, mindfulness exercises such as the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise or the Raisin Exercise can be used. For this research, the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise.

In this exercise, the participants were asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture”*



The participants were asked to close their eyes. They were asked to breathe in through their nose and exhale out from their mouth.

*"Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth."*

The participants were then asked to pay attention to any sensations in their toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). They were then asked to focus their attention to any sensations or temperature change in their hands and fingers.

*"Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations in your toes and feet" (2 minutes)*

*"Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change in your hands and fingers." (2 minutes)*

The participants were asked to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and to lose awareness of their current physical sensations. The participants were asked to come back to the sensations when they had drifted away.

*"It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel; when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations." (2 minutes)*

Next, the participants were asked to put their focus on their abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the abdomen with each breath they took.

*"Now turn your focus to your abdomen; with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your abdomen." (2 minutes)*

The participants were then asked to focus on their whole body and to feel the sensations throughout their body.

*"Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body." (2 minutes)*

Lastly, the participants were asked to open their eyes and come back to the room in their own time.



*"Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room."*

*"Share with me your experience."*

After the participants had shared their experience, a debrief was done.

#### **Debrief**

When the participants had completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participants were asked what they had noticed during the exercise. Once they had shared their experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and to lose awareness of the present. It was reiterated that the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

#### **Values and Values-Driven Actions**

In this part, participants learned about what values were and how they were important in helping them guide their daily behaviours. The participants were asked what values meant to them.

*"What do values mean to you?"*

All participants tended to mix up goals and values. It was reiterated to participants that goals were achievable and had a completion date whereas values would guide their daily behaviours. Participants were also asked what they would consider as internal or external barriers that would prevent them from achieving their goals and values.

*"What would you consider as internal and external barriers that would prevent you from achieving your goals and values?"*

#### **Compass Metaphor – Goals and Values**

To reiterate the difference between goals and values, the Compass Metaphor (Hayes et al, 1999, see Appendix 36) was used. The participants were asked to choose a direction from the compass (that was to signify the values). Once participants have chosen the direction

for their values, they were asked to identify landmarks (short term goals) along the road to their chosen direction. The participants were then asked to identify the next destination (long term goals). The participants were then asked what immediate steps they would take to walk towards their chosen directions.

*"Look at the compass and choose a direction, that will signify your values."*

*"Next please identify any landmarks along the road to your chosen direction, these will be your short-term goals."*

*"Please identify the next destination along the road to your chosen direction, this represents your long-term goals."*

*"What immediate steps would you take to walk in your chosen direction, this represents your values-based actions"*

*"Share with me your experience."*

After the participants had shared their experience, a debrief was done.

#### **Debrief**

Participants were told that values based actions allowed them to be aware of their values, their sense of purpose, life direction and meaning. Values-based actions reinforced values as a powerful guide to life goals and actions. Participants were told that these actions would help to enforce values as an inner compass to help them navigate through challenging times and would guide them to make important decisions. It was reiterated to the participants that actions which were guided by their values were unlikely to be influenced by unhelpful thoughts, feelings, moods, and behavioural habits.

#### **Value Cards**

Participants were then presented with values cards which consisted of 4 sections: caring for myself, connecting with other, challenging myself, valuing in the presence of difficulty (See Appendix 35). These sections each have 8 values. Participants were instructed to choose as many values that they wanted from the values cards, and to group them into 3 categories: least important, moderately important, and most important. From the most important category, they were to choose their top 5 values.

*"Please look at these values cards, they are categorised as follows: caring for myself, connecting with others, challenging myself, valuing in the presence of difficulty. In each of the category there are 8 different values. You can choose as many values as you want from any of the categories."*

*"Once you have chosen the values, please put them into the following 3 categories: least important, moderately important and most important."*

*"When you have categorised the values accordingly, please choose the top 5 values from the most important category."*

The participants were given Handout 1 (See Appendix 37). In the handout, participants were presented with 5 Values (Life) Areas: Your Health Values, Your Relationship Values, Your Work and Career Values, Your Leisure Time Values, and Your Personal Growth Values. Participants were told to choose 1 Value Area from the 5. They were then asked to choose which of the 5 important values they had chosen from the values cards apply to their chosen Value Area. They were then asked to write a value statement and about 3 to 5 value reminder words for their chosen value (see Handout 1). After that they were asked to fill in Handout 2 (See Appendix 38) where they were required to indicate which Values (Life) Areas they had chosen, their value reminder words, their short, medium and long term goals and their values-based actions. They were also required to write down any internal barriers that might prevent them from fulfilling their values goals and actions. They were instructed to do the home practices (a mindfulness exercise and values-based actions) as set out in Handout 3 (see Appendix 39) between session one and session two. The one week gap between sessions one and two allowed participants to practise the mindfulness exercise and values-based actions (p44, Flaxman, Bond & Liveheim, 2013).

#### Handout 1

*"Please choose which Value Area you would like to work on for the coming week."*

*"Decide which of your top 5 values you would like to work on for the coming week."*

*"Based on the value you have chosen for the Value Area, please write down a value statement and about 3 to 5 reminder words for that chosen value."*

## Handout 2

*"Under the Value column, please indicate the Value Area and the Value you will be working on for the coming week."*

*"Please also write down the reminder words for the chosen value."*

*"Under the Goals column, please write down the short term goals, medium term goals and long term goals."*

*"Under the Actions column, please write the 3 values-based actions that you will be working on for the coming week"*

Before receiving briefing about the Home Practices, the participants were reminded about the Two Skills Diagram (Appendix 34). The participants were also introduced to a Two Sheets of Paper Technique (see Appendix 40). One of sheets had the word "VALUE" and the other had the words "UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS". The purpose of showing the two papers to the participants was to reiterate that the training that they had gone through was intended to help them work towards their values despite their unhelpful thoughts, moods, and feelings. The point was to accept the unhelpful thoughts, moods and feelings in the background and work towards their values.

*"You will see before you two sheets of paper. One with the word VALUES and the other with the words UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS, AND FEELINGS. The purpose of the training you have gone through was to help you work towards your values [while saying this, the values sheet of paper was moved slightly to the front while the other sheet of paper was moved slightly behind] and to accept the unhelpful thoughts, moods and feelings in the background."*

After the participants were presented with the Two Sheets of Paper Techniques, they were briefed on Home Practices 1 and 2.

### Home Practices 1 and 2

For Home Practice 1, the participants were asked to engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that they would be performing over the following week. They were encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies, such as post-it stickers, noting task on their calendar, or setting a reminder on their mobile phones. They were encouraged to notice what happen when they performed the chosen actions. They were required to write down any thoughts and feelings that would show up before, during and after they had performed each action. They were also asked to take notice of how others responded and any consequences of their actions. The participants were told that it

was important that they completed the home practices they had been tasked to do. They were told that the home practices would be reviewed in the next session.

#### Home Practice 1

*"For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice."*

*"Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions."*

*"Do take notice of how others respond to your actions and also whether there are any consequences to your actions."*

For Home Practice 2, the participants were asked to take about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. They were asked to record any observations and comments.

#### Home Practice 2

*"For home practice 2, please spend about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. You can use the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise for this practice."*

Once the instructions for the home practices were explained, the first session ended with the participants and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session. A total of 1 hour and 30 minutes were used in the first session. The second session was conducted on the following week.

#### Session Two

In this session, the researcher reviewed the participants' home practices and the participants continued to learn skills to help them work towards their values. The skills were taught using five exercises: Monsters in the Bus (see Appendix 41), Defusion Technique (see Appendix 42), Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion and Physicalizing Exercise, to help the participants learn psychological acceptance and perspective thinking. Prior to them learning the skills, the participants' home practices were reviewed.

The researcher started Session two with the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise with the participants. The purpose of this exercise was to create awareness and mindfulness.

#### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 minutes)**

In this exercise, the participants were asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*"Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture."*

The participants were asked to close their eyes. They were asked to breathe in through their nose and exhale out from their mouth.

*"Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth."*

The participants were then asked to pay attention to any sensations in their toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). They were then asked to move their attention to any sensations or temperature change in their hands and fingers.

*"Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations in your toes and feet." (2 minutes)*

*"Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change in your hands and fingers." (2 minutes)*

The participants were asked to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. The participants were asked to come back to the sensations when they had drifted away.

*"It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations" (2 minutes)*

Next, the participants were asked to put their focus on their abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the abdomen with each breath they took.

*"Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your abdomen" (2 minutes)*

The participants were then asked to focus on their whole body and to feel the sensations throughout their body.

*"Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body" (2 minutes)*

Lastly, the participants were asked to open their eyes and come back to the room in their own time.

*"Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room"*

*"Share with me your experience."*

After the participants had shared their experience, a debrief was done.

#### **Debrief**

When the participants had completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participants were asked what they noticed during the exercise. Once they had shared their experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. It was reiterated that the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

#### **Reviewing of Home Practices**

The purpose of reviewing the home practice was to enable the researcher to determine whether participants had applied the skills they had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries pertaining to the home practices, skills learned and to reinforce the concepts of values and values-based actions.

### Home Practice 1 – Values-Based Actions

Using the Two Skills Diagram (see Appendix 34), the participants were reminded about the relationship between mindfulness and values-based actions. The researchers checked with the participants which values-based actions they had performed, and what they had noticed before, during and after they had performed those actions. The participants were also asked to share what values-based actions they did not perform. They were also encouraged to share the internal and external barriers that had prevented them from performing their values-based actions.

*"Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values-based actions."*

*"Please share with me what were the values-based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?"*

*"Were there any values-based actions that you did not perform?"*

*"What were the internal and external barriers that have prevented you from performing the values-based actions?"*

After the participants had completed their sharing and the Home Practice 1 had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to review the Home Practice 2.

### Home Practice 2 – Mindfulness Exercise

Participants were asked about their experience with regards to the mindfulness exercises, how much time they had spent each day on the mindfulness exercises, their observations and comments.

*"Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercises."*

*"How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?"*

*"What were your observations?"*



When the participants had finished sharing and the Home Practice 2 had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to the next stage of the session – Skills Learning.

### **Skills Learning**

After both Home Practice 1 and 2 had been reviewed, the skills learning session commenced. The participants were told that they would be learning skills of psychological acceptance, defusion techniques and perspective taking. The skills were to be taught using five different exercises and they were: Exercise 1 - Monsters (Passengers) in the Bus (see Appendix 41), Exercise 2 - Defusion Technique, Exercise 3 - Cartoon Voice Technique, Exercise 4 - Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion (Harris 2009), and Exercise 5 - Physicalizing Exercise.

#### **Exercise 1 - Monsters (Passengers) in the Bus**

The purpose of this exercise was to teach the participants about psychological acceptance. The participants were shown a picture with monsters (passengers) in the bus. The participants were told that they were the driver of the Bus of Life and the monsters (passengers) on the bus represented their thoughts, feelings, moods, and urges. The participants were told that as the driver, their chosen direction was to go towards their chosen values and the passengers were there to distract him from going towards their values. Participants were asked what they would do in such a situation.

*"This is a picture we call monsters in the bus. You are the driver of this Bus of Life and the monsters represent your thoughts, feelings, moods, and urges. As the driver, you have a chosen direction to go towards your values but the monsters are here to distract you from going towards your values. What would you do in this situation?"*

After the participants had shared their answers, a debrief was done.

### **Debrief**

The researcher explained to the participants that trying to get rid of the passengers would be futile. The passengers would always try to distract and influence their actions. Therefore, the participants would have to be aware of the presence of the passengers but continue to proceed to move towards their values. The participants then moved to the next exercise where they learned the technique of defusion.

### **Exercise 2 - Defusion Technique**

The purpose of this skill (defusion technique) is to help participants become aware of the unhelpful thoughts, emotions, and moods that they will experience and that they will not to be entangled by them. The researcher highlighted the reasons for untangling oneself from thoughts, emotions, and moods. The researcher explained to the participants: 1) how internal barriers (thoughts, emotions, and moods) could cripple their well-being; 2) how the mind in the course of trying to protect them would end up being unhelpful as it would start to judge them; and 3) how when they were too caught up with their mind's output would miss experiencing the present (this was to enforce mindfulness). The participants were then asked to write down unhelpful thoughts that had prevented them from pursuing their values based actions or goals on Handout 4 (see Appendix 42).

*"Often, we get caught up with our thoughts, emotions, and moods and when we spend too much time on them, we tend to lose out on the experience of the present."*

*"Our mind will constantly be trying to help us by making us ruminate but that can be unhelpful as the mind will then start to judge us."*

*"Please use Handout 4 and write down some of the unhelpful thoughts that have prevented you from pursuing your values-based actions or goals"*

After the participants had completed Handout 4, a debrief was done.

### **Debrief**

Once the participants had identified their unhelpful thoughts, the researcher reiterated the point that the purpose was to be aware of those unhelpful thoughts, emotions, and moods but not to attempt to get rid of them. The participants moved next to the next exercise where they learned how to hear their negative thoughts through the voice of a cartoon character.

### **Exercise 3 - Cartoon Voice Technique**

The purpose of using this technique is to create an awareness that negative thoughts, emotions, and moods are simply language (p 60, Harris, 2008) and thus that they should not take them too seriously. Using a cartoon voice and repeating negative thoughts, emotions and moods, participants are able to hear them in a different voice and thereby lessen their impact.

The participants were asked to take one of the unhelpful thoughts that they had labelled in Handout 4 and focus on the impact of that unhelpful thought. They were then asked to choose a cartoon voice. The participants were then asked to hear the unhelpful thought through the voice of the cartoon voice they had chosen. They were then asked to look at the unhelpful thought and notice any impact. The participants were asked to share their experience of hearing their negative thought using a cartoon voice. Once the participants had shared their experience, the participants were debriefed. The researcher reiterated the importance of being aware of their negative thoughts and stressed that those thoughts were merely words which were not to be taken too seriously.

*"From the negative thoughts you have identified earlier, focus on one of them and its impact."*

*"Next please choose a cartoon character you like and hear that negative thought through the voice of the cartoon character."*

*"Focus on the negative thought and notice any impact."*

*"Share with me your experience about hearing the negative thought through the voice of the cartoon voice."*

*"The purpose of this technique is to help you to recognise and be aware of negative thoughts and that they are merely words, not to be taken too seriously."*

After the participants had shared their experience, a debrief was done.

#### **Debrief**

Participants were taught how to use a cartoon voice to repeat the unhelpful thoughts they had. The purpose of using the cartoon voice was to let the participants realise that the unhelpful thoughts, emotions, or moods were just a facet of language. Repeating unhelpful thoughts, emotions, and moods in a cartoon voice, made them lose their impact. The participants next learned how to defuse their negative thoughts in the following exercise.

#### **Exercise 4 – Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion (Harris 2009)**

This exercise was used to demonstrate fusion and defusion and to help participants to be aware and to be able to watch their thoughts. The participants were asked to write down an unhelpful thought as big as possible to cover a piece of paper. Once they had done so, they were asked to hold the paper tightly and to hold it up touching their nose. The participants were asked to look past the paper (their unhelpful thought) at their surroundings. The participants were asked to describe the experience. They were then asked to move the paper slightly away from their nose and to hold the paper less tightly. The participants were asked to describe any difference between the two perspectives. They should have replied that now they could see the unhelpful thought and their surroundings. Next the participants were asked to fully stretch out their arms still holding the paper and hold it till their arms ached. Once they were no longer able to hold up the paper, they were asked to put the paper down on their lap. The participants were then asked about their experience.

*"Please think of an unhelpful thought and write it as big as possible to cover the piece of paper."*

*"Please hold up the paper and place it touching your nose and then look past the paper at your surroundings."*

*"Now move the paper slightly away from your nose and tell me what do you see?"*

*"Still holding your paper, stretch your arm fully. Once you feel that your arms are aching, put your arms down and place them on your lap."*

*"Share with me your experience about this exercise."*

Once the participants had shared their experience, a debrief was done.

#### **Debrief**

The participants were told that it was important to be aware of unhelpful thoughts but to be mindful not to spend too much time on these thoughts, as this would result in them missing out on things that were happening around them (when they put the paper touching their nose). They would thus not be able to be in the moment. They would begin to see their surroundings and notice their thoughts when they put the paper slightly away from their nose (this was to create a healthy psychological distance from the unhealthy thoughts). They would learn to accept and be aware of the unhelpful thoughts but not actively to try to fight them when they put the paper down on their lap. This move

was meant to allow the participants to experience unhelpful thoughts and be present at the moment, that is to defuse from their unhelpful thoughts. (Hayes et al, 1999; Harris, 2009). In the last exercise, participants learned how to physicalize their negative thoughts and learned the skill of emotional acceptance.

#### **Exercise 5 - Physicalizing Exercise**

The purpose of teaching the participants this physicalizing exercise is to cultivate emotional acceptance skills. Similar to the defusion exercise taught before, this exercise was meant to help the participants to create a psychological distance between themselves and their emotions, moods, and thoughts. The exercise sought to encourage the participants to open up about an uncomfortable emotion and to notice the impact of the emotion as physical sensations that were experienced throughout their body. The participants were asked to objectify the feeling/sensation they experienced as an object out of their body. They were then asked to welcome the objectified feeling back to their body, as a form of acceptance of that feeling. After the participants completed the exercise, they were asked to share their experience.

*"Please close your eyes and notice your body sensations and feeling as you breathe in and out. Focus on the sensations in your toes, hands, abdomen and the whole body. When your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back and notice the sensations."*

*"Now I would like you to think of a stressful event, situation or a person and think on it for a few minutes. While you are doing this, be aware of any changes taking place in your body, for example feelings or physical reaction."*

*"Identify where the feeling or physical reaction is and then draw an imaginary line across the feeling. Be curious about this feeling as if it is the first time you are encountering it."*

*"Please imagine the feeling as a physical object and that it has now popped out of your body."*

*"The feeling is now outside your body, look at the feeling and now give it a shape. Next give it a colour. Then give it a weight."*

*"Now take a step back and look at this object."*

*"Next welcome the object back to your body. Notice where the object has settled and draw an imaginary line across it."*

*"Carry on focusing on your breathing. Turn your awareness now to your abdomen and then your whole body. Taking your last breath in and out, when you are ready, return to the room and open your eyes."*

*"Share with me your experience about this exercise."*

#### **Debrief**

The participants were asked to share their experience in this physicalizing exercise. They were asked what the feeling that they have chosen was and the form it took as an object, its shape and weight. It was reiterated that it was important to be able to notice feeling or emotion for what it actually was and where it could reside in the body. The purpose of objectifying the feeling or emotion and popping it out of the body was intended to create a healthy psychological distance between the person and his/her feeling and emotions. To reinforce psychological distance, the researcher did a quick "hands as emotions" exercise. Together with the participants, the researcher used his hands as emotions and covered his eyes. This was to indicate that as a person was embroiled in his or her feelings and emotions, he or she would find it difficult to look beyond them. But by moving the hands slightly away, this would create a psychological distance that in turn would provide a mindful perspective of those feelings and emotions.

After the participants had learned the three skills of psychological acceptance, defusion techniques and perspective taking, they were briefed about Home Practices 1, 2 and 3.

#### **Home Practices 1, 2 and 3 (Handout 6 – Appendix 43)**

For Home Practice 1, the participants were asked to engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that they would be performing over the following week. They were encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies. They were encouraged to notice what happened when they performed the chosen actions. They were required to write down any thoughts and feelings that would show up before, during and after they had performed each action. They were also asked to take notice of how others responded and any consequences of their actions.

*"For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice."*

*"Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions."*

*"Do take notice of how others respond to your actions and also whether there are any consequences to your actions."*

For Home Practice 2, the participants were asked to achieve four values-based goals before Session 3. They were asked to focus on their short term goals.

*"For home practice 2, please look at the four short term goals you have recorded in Session 2. Please achieve these goals. Stay present and notice what happens as you pursue these goals."*

For Home Practice 3, the participants were asked to take about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. They were asked to record any observations and comments.

*"For home practice 3, please spend about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. You can use the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise for this practice. You will be given 4 copies to record your practice."*

The participants were also given Handout 6 (See Appendix 43). This handout was meant to help participants, if they preferred, to visualize their behavioural process. The squiggly line diagonally up the centre of the page signified that to achieve a values-based direction, the process to be followed would be filled with twists and turns. The rectangular boxes were used for values-based actions and the empty scrolls represented the values-based goals the participants would like to achieve.

Once the instructions for the home practices had been explained, the second session ended with the participant and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session. The next session was scheduled to take place one month later.

### **Session Three**

In session three, participants' home practices for the whole month were reviewed. The researcher reviewed the mindfulness exercises and values-based actions. In doing so, the researcher was able to see whether participants had used the skills they had learned and had progressed in their values-based actions. Similarly, queries were clarified and concepts were reinforced.

In this session, participants were asked to answer only the WAAQ questionnaire. This was in order to determine whether participants' psychological flexibility scores had changed after the training sessions. In addition, the researcher conducted a short interview to understand how participants viewed the whole skills training process. To encourage them to carry on practising the new acquired skills, participants were presented with home practices for further practice (Handouts 7 and 8 – see Appendices 44 and 45). To start this session,



participants were led to do a shorter version of the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes). This was to create awareness and mindfulness.

#### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes)**

In this exercise, the participants were asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*"Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture."*

The participants were asked to close their eyes. They were asked to breathe in through their nose and exhale out from their mouth.

*"Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth."*

The participants were then asked to pay attention to any sensations in their toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). They were then asked to move their attention to any sensations or temperature change in their hands and fingers.

*"Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations in your toes and feet." (1 minute)*

*"Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change in your hands and fingers." (1 minute)*

The participants were asked to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. The participants were asked to come back to the sensations when they had drifted away.

*"It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations." (1 minute)*

Next the participants were asked to put their focus on their abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the abdomen with each breath they took.



*"Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your abdomen." (1 minute)*

The participants were then asked to focus on their whole body and to feel the sensations throughout their body.

*"Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body." (1 minute)*

Lastly, the participants were asked to open their eyes and come back to the room in their own time.

*"Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room."*

*"Share with me your experience."*

After the participants had shared their experience, a debrief was done.

#### **Debrief**

When the participants had completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participants were asked what they noticed during the exercise. Once they had shared their experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. It was reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

#### **Review of Home Practices**

The purpose of reviewing the home practice was to enable the researcher to determine whether participants had applied the skills they had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries pertaining to the home practices, skills learned and reinforce the concepts of values and values-based actions.

### Home Practice 1 – Values Based Actions

Using the Two Skills Diagram (see Appendix 34), the relationship between mindfulness and values-based actions was reiterated to the participants. The researcher checked with the participants which values-based actions they had performed, what they had noticed before, during and after they had performed the actions. They were asked to share what values-based actions they have not performed. The participants were also asked to share internal and external barriers that prevented them performing their values-based actions.

*"Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values based actions."*

*"Please share with me what were values-based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?"*

*"Were there any value-based actions that you did not perform?"*

*"What were the internal and external barriers that prevented you from performing the values-based actions?"*

After the participants had completed their sharing and the Home Practice 1 had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to review the Home Practice 2.

### Home Practice 2 – Four Value-Based Goals

Participants were asked whether they had achieved performing the four value-based goals. They were asked to share what they had noticed when they pursued the goals.

*"I would like to check whether you did achieve the four values-based goals?"*

*"What did you notice when you were pursuing the goals?"*

After the participants had completed their sharing and the Home Practice 2 had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to review the Home Practice 3.

### **Home Practice 3 – Mindfulness Exercise**

Participants were asked about their experience with regards to the mindfulness exercises, how much time they had spent each day for the mindfulness exercise, their observations, and comments.

*"Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercises."*

*"How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?"*

*"What were your observations?"*

When the participants had finished sharing and the Home Practice 3 had been reviewed. The researcher proceeded to the next stage of the session – Values Consistency Exercise.

### **Values Consistency Exercise – Handout 7 (see Appendix 44)**

After reviewing the home practices, the participants were asked to fill in Handout 7. The purpose of doing this was to see whether how value consistent the participants had been for the past 1 month.

After they had completed filling up Handout 7, the researcher went through the information with the participants. The researcher asked the participants about the areas which they felt were not consistent with their values, and their reasons for that. This allowed the researcher to reinforce the concepts and skills learned in previous sessions.

*"Thank you for filling up Handout 7, let us go through the handout."*

*"There were some areas you have marked not consistent with your values. Could you share with me why this is so?"*

After the participants had completed Handout 7, the researcher proceeded to administer the WAAQ.

**WAAQ (see pages 8 and 9 of Appendix 29)**

As stated, the purpose of asking the participants to fill this questionnaire was to see whether their psychological flexibility had changed after the skills learning sessions and home practices. The participants were asked to answer the 7 questions in the questionnaire – WAAQ.

*"I would like to ask you 7 statements and please answer them as truthfully as you can."*

*"Statement 1 – I am able to work effectively in spite of any personal worries that I have. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True."*

*"Statement 2 – I can admit to my mistakes at work and still be successful."*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True."*

*"Statement 3 – I can still work very effectively even if I am nervous about something."*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True."*

*"Statement 4 – Worries do not get in the way of my success. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True."*

*"Statement 5 – I can perform as required no matter how I feel. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True."*

*"Statement 6 – I can work effectively even when I doubt myself. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True."*

*"Statement 7 – My thoughts and feelings do not get in the way of my work. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True."*

After the participants had completed the 7 statements, they were asked how the processes had helped them with regards to negative thoughts and emotions.

*"Please share with me how the processes have helped you with regards to negative thoughts and emotions."*

Once the participants had shared their experiences, the researcher did a research debrief.

### **Research Debrief**

The research debrief was intended to let the participants know the purpose of the skills training sessions and how the skills could help helping those who had been exposed to workplace bullying.

The researcher explained the strategies used by victims of workplace bullying and how they could only be useful to a certain extent. For example, when victims were not able to seek redress, they could resort to counterproductive behaviours such as retaliation or being absent from work. If the strategies used were unsuccessful, victims might choose to leave. However, while leaving can help victims to stop bullying, victims continue to carry with them the emotional baggage of that experience, which can affect their psychological well-being. This could include rumination of the bullying experience and self-blame. In the workplace bullying literature, to date, there is no research focusing on how individuals can help themselves when they are being bullied (self-intervention).

The skills training sessions formed part of the self-intervention. The skills learned from the sessions cover the six core processes of the therapy Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. A brief explanation of the six processes were explained to the participants. The researcher then linked the skills learned to the bullying experiences the participants had gone through. This was done to allow the participants to see how the skills could be used to help them in managing the negative thoughts and emotions they might have felt or continued to be feeling due to their exposure to bullying.

*"Thank you for participating in all the sessions. I would like to take this opportunity to explain to you the purpose of my research."*

*"As you know, workplace bullying is unavoidable and often people will use various ways to counteract it. These could be direct or indirect ways. For example, an individual can choose to resort to behaving counterproductively, such as by retaliation or by being absent from work. However, when these strategies do not work, an individual may choose to leave the organisation. Although these*

*strategies do provide a resolution for an individual, he or she would leave the organization carrying the baggage of the bullying experience and this can often impact on their psychological well-being. That is, the individual could spend time ruminating about their bullying experience and blame himself or herself for what had happened."*

*"Workplace bullying research to date has not address what bullied individuals could do to help themselves (self-intervention)."*

*"That is why the main focus of this research is to find a way to help bullied individuals."*

*"The skills training sessions are part of the six processes of the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. The six processes are: acceptance, cognitive defusion, self as context, present, values and committed actions. The six processes enable an individual to become psychologically flexible, that is not to get stuck in negative thoughts, emotions, or moods, but instead to look at what matters to him or her (values) and to spend time working towards that."*

*"The mindfulness exercise allows us to be aware of our surroundings, how we can be affected physically and physiologically when we are caught up with negative thoughts, emotions, and moods." (Self-Awareness)*

*"Monsters in the Bus, Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Defusion/Fusion Exercise and Physicalizing Exercise help an individual to accept and defuse negative thoughts, emotions, and moods. In using these, an individual will learn to create a psychological distance between himself and herself and the negative thoughts, emotions and moods. (self-as-context, a form of perspective taking)*

*"Home practices of stating values and values-based actions encourage individuals to use the skills of acceptance, defusion and perspective taking to work towards their values-based goals."*

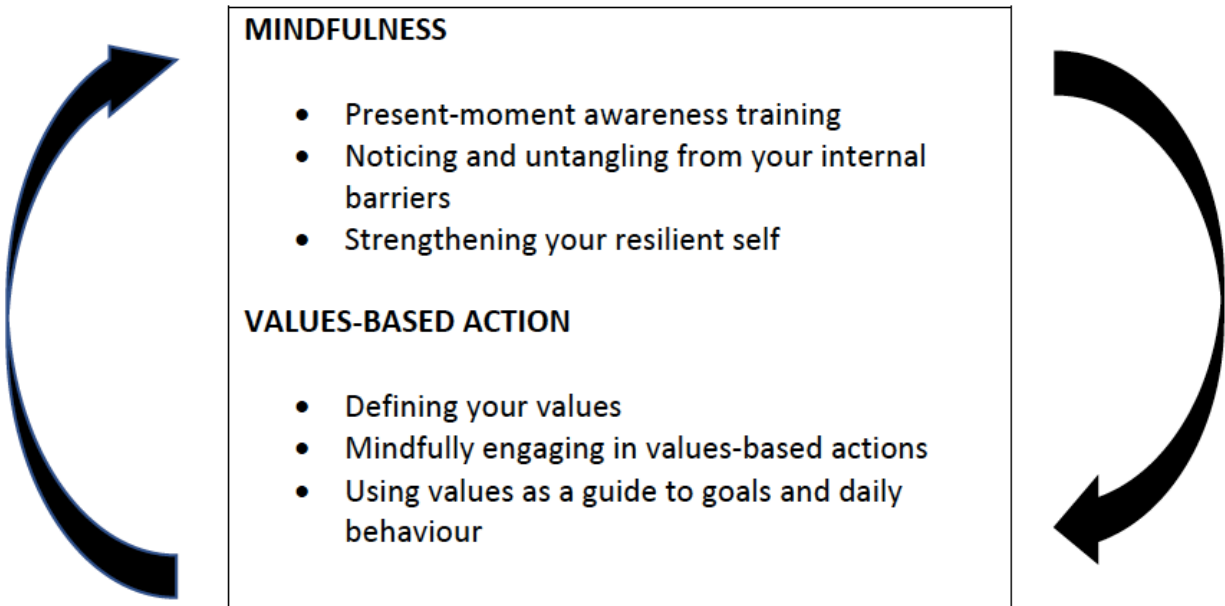
*"When applying these skills in the context of workplace bullying, an individual will learn not to let the bullying experience deter him or her from working towards his or her important values. So instead of trying hard to fight the bullying or the emotions, the individual will focus on what are the best ways to counteract the bullying (values-based action) and not let negative thoughts, emotions and moods derail him or her from the values."*

Once the research debrief had been completed, the researcher encouraged the participants to continue the home practices. The participants were given Handout 8 (see Appendix 45). The participants were told to follow the previous instructions that were given for the home practices if they decided to carry on.

*"Thank you once again for participating in this research. I would like to give you Handout 8. Although your participation in this research has ended, I would encourage you to carry on doing the home practices that are contained in Handout 8. You can use the previous instructions to help you continue your home practices."*

To conclude the session, the participants were thanked again for their participation. They were assured that all data collected would only be used for this research and would be anonymised. They were told that should they decide not to have their data used for this research, they would need to contact the researcher.

## TWO SKILLS DIAGRAM





CARING FOR MYSELF	
Getting physical	Accepting myself
Giving thanks	Seeing possibilities
Asking for help	Feeling pleasure
Finding peace	Understanding
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## CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

Trusting

Being loving

Being truthful

Admiring

Connecting

Appreciating others

Belonging

Being compassionate

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## CHALLENGING MYSELF

Dancing with joy

Imagining

Daring to dream

Creating

Seeking freedom

Achieving

Seeking knowledge

Embracing the moment

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## VALUING IN THE PRESENCE OF DIFFICULTY

Forgiving

Seeking wisdom

Letting it be

Struggling

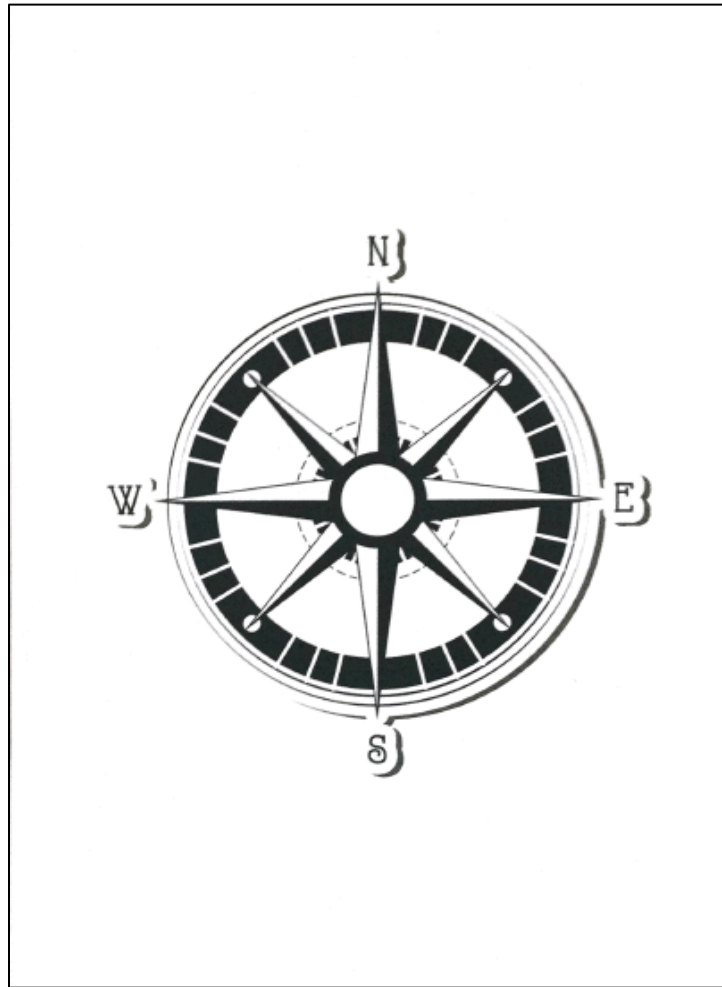
Staying with uncertainty

Feeling secure

Saying good-bye

Feeling different

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## VALUES-BASED ACTION

### Handout 1: DEFINE YOUR VALUES

This written exercise is designed to help you become much more aware of the purpose and direction in your life. For some areas of your life, your values may be easily accessible. For others, you may have to reflect for a while on what you really care about and the type of person you ideally want to be.

There are no right and wrong answers to this type of exercise. It is simply designed to help you become more aware of the particular personal strengths and qualities you personally want to express in your own behaviour.

The exercise is designed to help you define your values for five areas of life: Health; Relationships; Work and Career; Leisure Time; and Personal Growth. You may find the areas overlap somewhat. That's fine. The key thing is to begin constructing the qualities you most want to pursue – essentially capturing the type of person you ideally want to be. What you want your life *to be about*.

Here are some additional tips for completing this exercise:

- Think of your values as the 'behavioural guides' that you get to choose for each area of your life.
- They're about how you choose to be – for example being supportive, being loving, being patient, being competitive, being hard working are ways of describing values.
- Values can never be achieved, so they are more general than goals and actions

**You do not have to show your answers to anyone, so please take this opportunity to be honest with yourself, and discover what you truly value**

### **Your HEALTH values**

**Think about your values in relation to your health and physical well-being. What are your intentions with regard to diet, exercise, smoking, alcohol, and general self-care and well-being? Do you wish to pursue a healthier lifestyle? If so, what form might that take in your life? If this area of life is important to you, see if you can capture your values regarding the promotion and maintenance of good health.**

**VALUE STATEMENT:**

**VALUE REMINDER WORDS:**

### **Your RELATIONSHIP values**

In this section, write down a description of the person you choose to be in your various relationships. This section can be divided into relationships with your spouse or partner, children, family members, and friends. In an ideal world, how do you *choose* to relate to the people in your life? How would you treat others if you were the “ideal you” in your various relationships? Describe the personal qualities that you most want to express in any personal and social relationships that are important to you.

**VALUE STATEMENT:**

**VALUE REMINDER WORDS:**



## **Your WORK AND CAREER values**

**In your current job, describe the type of employee or manager you most want to be. What personal qualities or strengths do you show at work when you are at your best? What are your values around how to interact with your colleagues? If you are a manager, what type of manager do you choose to be? What are your innermost work values – persistence, hard work, continued development, being supportive to others, career progression, customer service, cooperation, creativity?**

**VALUE STATEMENT:**

**VALUE REMINDER WORDS:**

### **Your LEISURE TIME values**

Describe the type of leisure time you would most like to have, including hobbies, sports, and leisure activities. What do you or would you most like to pursue for fun and fulfillment in your leisure time? Do you choose having fun, relaxing, or engaging in creative activities and hobbies? What is important to you in this area of your life? Capture the values you would most like to guide your actions during your leisure time.

**VALUE STATEMENT:**

**VALUE REMINDER WORDS:**

### **Your PERSONAL GROWTH values**

Describe the types of personal development activities you would be interested in pursuing. This could include training programs you would like to attend; any groups you would like to join; learning new skills or languages; developing greater knowledge about topics that interest you; spiritual pursuits such as meditation, religion, or yoga; this area could also include contributing to community, political, or environmental causes. If continued personal development is important to you, try to capture the way you would like to be in this area of your life.

**VALUE STATEMENT:**

**VALUE REMINDER WORDS:**

Appendix 38

<b>VALUE</b>	<b>GOALS</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>LIFE AREA:</b> health/ relationships/ work/ leisure/ personal growth         </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <b>VALUE REMINDER WORDS</b> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Short-term goals: Next 4 weeks</b>            1. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>            2. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>            3. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>            4. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Medium-term goals: next 6 months to one year</b>            1. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>            2. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>            3. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>            4. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <b>Long-term goals: next three years or more</b>            1. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>            2. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>            3. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>            4. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>VALUE-BASED ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT WEEK</b>             1. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">           2. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">           3. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <b>INTERNAL BARRIERS.</b> Record any "unhelpful" thoughts, feelings, urges, moods that might interfere with value-based goals and actions in this area of your life.         </div>		

**Handout 3: HOME PRACTICE**  
**(To be completed between Session 1 and Session 2)**

To get the most out of this training, you are strongly encouraged to practice transferring mindfulness and values-based action skills into your daily life. To help you do this, it is recommended that you complete the following two assignments before we meet again for session 2.

**HOME PRACTICE 1**

**ENGAGE MINDFULLY IN THREE VALUE-BASED ACTIONS OVER THE NEXT WEEK.**

During the session you identified three valued actions to perform over the next week. Use your reminder strategies (e.g., wristband, or sticker on your phone) to help you remember to perform these actions. A key part of this exercise is to pay attention to what happens. If you do perform your chosen actions, notice what it is like to do so. *Catch a glimpse* of any thoughts and feelings that show up before, during, and after you have performed each action. *Notice* how others respond. *Notice* any consequences of your actions.

If you don't perform one or more of your actions try to notice any external or internal barriers that got in the way.

Record your experiences on the following page of this handout, so that you can discuss your general experiences in pairs in session 2.

**HOME PRACTICE 2**

**PRACTICE MINDFULNESS OF BREATHING EXERCISE AT LEAST THREE TIMES OVER THE NEXT WEEK.**

This takes about 10 minutes to complete on each occasion. Remember that these mindfulness meditations offer the richest practice for developing greater present moment awareness.

Record your experiences in the mindfulness diary on the final page of this handout.

### HOME PRACTICE 1: Record of Mindful Engagement in Values-Based Action

Area of your life: health/ relationships/ work/ leisure time/ personal growth

Personal value/ values worked on this week:

List the values-based actions you performed mindfully this week	What did you notice before, during, and after performing these actions?

List any values-based actions you intended to perform but didn't	External barriers (e.g., time/ opportunity)	Internal barriers (e.g., unhelpful thoughts or feelings that popped up and got in the way)

## HOME PRACTICE 2: Mindfulness practice diary

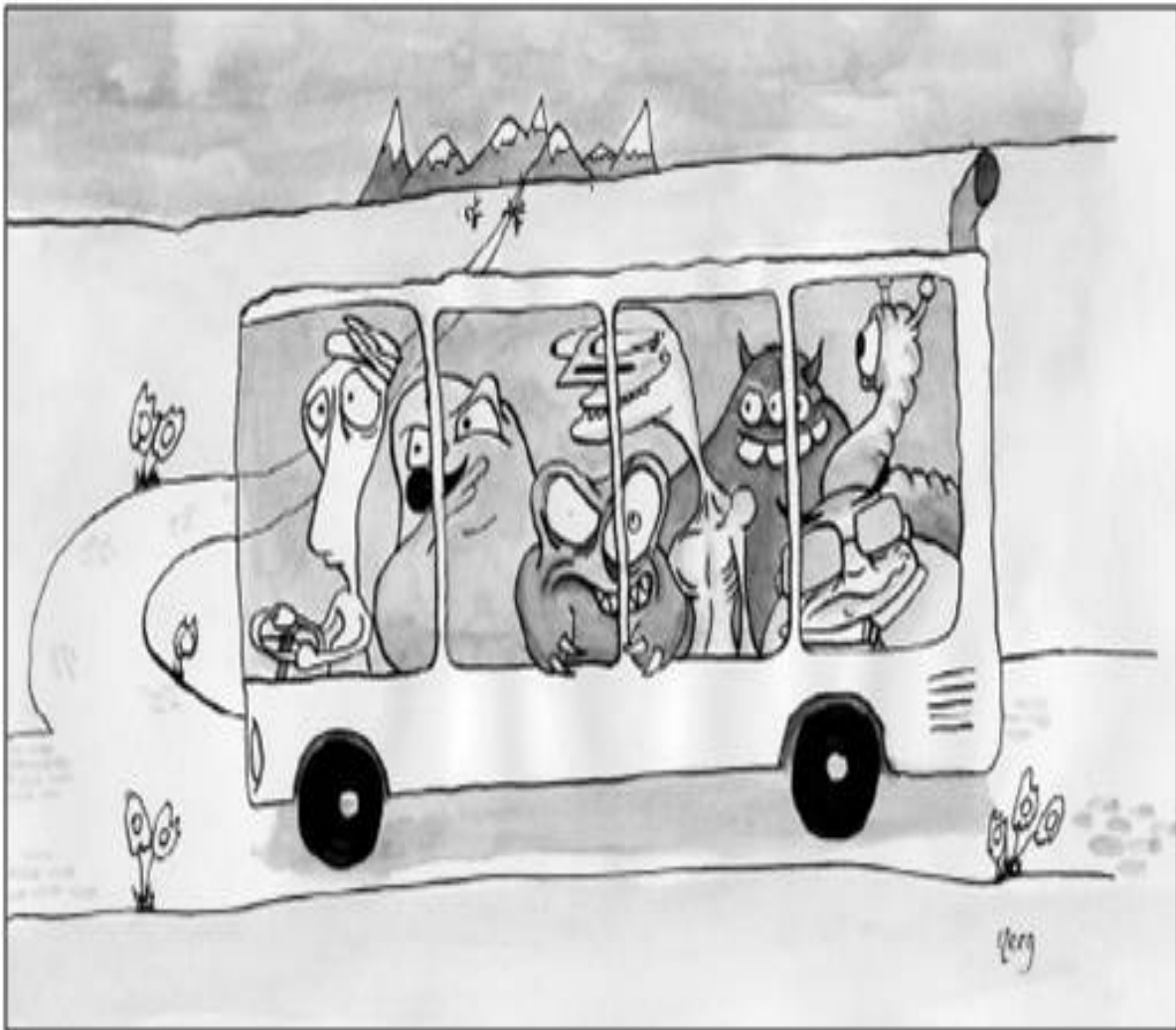
Day	Exercise	Duration	Observations and comments
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			

**VALUE**

**“UNHELPFUL”**

**THOUGHTS/ MOODS/  
FEELINGS**





**Handout 4: UNTANGLING FROM THOUGHT BARRIERS TO VALUES-BASED ACTION**

Use this handout to capture any "unhelpful" thoughts that interfere with your effectiveness or your ability to pursue valued actions or goals.



*The Mindful and Effective Employee: Plautman, Bond, Liebow, 2011*  
[www.mindfulemployee.com](http://www.mindfulemployee.com)

LIFE AREA	health/ relationships/ work/ leisure/ personal growth
VALUE REMINDER WORDS	

Handout 5

The Mindful and Effective Employee  
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[www.mindfulemployee.com](http://www.mindfulemployee.com)

**Handout 6: HOME PRACTICE**  
**(To be completed between Session 2 and Session 3)**

To get the most out of this training, you are strongly encouraged to practice transferring mindfulness and values-based action skills into your daily life. To help you do this, it is recommended that you complete the following assignments before we meet again for the final session.

**HOME PRACTICE 1**

**ENGAGE MINDFULLY IN THREE VALUE-BASED ACTIONS OVER THE NEXT WEEK**

Instructions are exactly the same as last week. Use your reminder strategies (e.g., wristband, or sticker on your phone) to remember to perform your valued actions, and pay attention to what happens before, during, and after. Use the exercise to become aware of any thoughts and feelings that pull you off course.

**HOME PRACTICE 2**

**WORK TOWARDS FOUR VALUES-BASED GOALS BEFORE SESSION 3**

Set yourself the challenge to achieve four *values-based goals* over the next four weeks (before we meet again for session 3). For now focus on the short-term goals you recorded during session 2, or work on the exercises at home to generate additional values-based goals. Stay present and notice what happens as you pursue goals that are guided by one or more of your values.

**HOME PRACTICE 3**

**MINDFULNESS PRACTICE**

Get into the habit of practicing **mindfulness of the breath** or **mindfulness of the body and breath** three times per week before we meet again.

Practice the **cartoon/ film voices technique** whenever you notice yourself being overly influenced by unhelpful thoughts.

Practice the **physicalizing** exercise twice in your own time, and particularly when you notice yourself becoming wrapped up in a difficult feeling or mood.

Start **building brief mindfulness into your daily routine** – becoming psychologically present for tasks that you used to perform on automatic pilot – for example, getting ready for work in the morning; eating and drinking; travelling to work; and so on. Practicing a little mindfulness every day is the secret!

Record your experiences in the mindfulness diary on the final page of this handout.

**HOME PRACTICE 1: Record of Mindful Engagement in Values-Based Action**

Area of your life: health/ relationships/ work/ leisure time/ personal growth

Personal value/ values worked on this week:

List the values-based actions you performed mindfully this week	What did you notice before, during, and after performing these actions?

List any values-based actions you intended to perform but didn't	External barriers (e.g., time/ opportunity)	Internal barriers (e.g., unhelpful thoughts or feelings that popped up and got in the way)

VALUE	→	GOALS	→	ACTIONS
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>LIFE AREA:</b> health/ relationships/ work/ leisure/ personal growth         </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <b>VALUE REMINDER WORDS</b> </div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Short-term goals: Next 4 weeks</b>            1. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>            2. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>            3. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>            4. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Medium-term goals: next 6 months to one year</b>            1. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>            2. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>            3. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>            4. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <b>Long-term goals: next three years or more</b>            1. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>            2. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>            3. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>            4. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div> </div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>VALUE-BASED ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT WEEK</b>             1. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; width: 100%;"></div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">           2. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; width: 100%;"></div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">           3. <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; width: 100%;"></div> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <b>INTERNAL BARRIERS.</b> Record any "unhelpful" thoughts, feelings, urges, moods that might interfere with value-based goals and actions in this area of your life.   <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div> </div>				

### HOME PRACTICE 3: Mindfulness practice diary

Day	Exercise	Duration	Observations and comments
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			

**Handout 7: ASSESSING VALUE CONSISTENCY**

This exercise encourages you to assess how *values-consistent* you have been over the past couple of weeks. Use this handout to identify the values you are most interested in pursuing, and then consider the actions that have been consistent and inconsistent with those values over the past two weeks. Have you been bringing your values to life?

**Your HEALTH values**

Record your key value reminder words for this area of your life:

Now reflect on your actions OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS. To what extent were your day-to-day actions consistent with your health values? For example, did your eating, drinking, and exercise behaviors move you in a healthy direction? To what extent did you purposefully engage in exercise? Did you overdo it on any unhealthy behaviors? How well did you sleep? Think about all your actions over the past couple of weeks related to your health.

Actions that were more consistent with my main health value		Actions that were less consistent with my main health value

On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is this health value to you right now?

(1 = not at all important; 10 = very important) \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 to 10, how value-consistent have your health-related actions been over the past 2 weeks?

(1 = not at all consistent; 10 = highly consistent) \_\_\_\_\_



### Your RELATIONSHIP values

Record your key value reminder words for this area of your life:

PARTNER	
CHILDREN	
FAMILY	
FRIENDS	

Now reflect on your actions OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS. To what extent were your day-to-day actions consistent with your most important relationship values? For example, did you relate to others (e.g., partner, family, friends) in ways that are consistent with your values? Did your actions support the development of relationships that you care about? Did you do things to nurture relationships that are important to you? Were some of your social interactions 'hijacked' by your thoughts or feelings in the moment? Think about all your actions over the past couple of weeks related to your values around relationships.

Actions that were more consistent with my main relationship values		Actions that were less consistent with my main relationship values

On a scale of 1 to 10, how important are each of your relationship values to you right now?

(1 = not at all important; 10 = very important) \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 to 10, how values-consistent have your relationship behaviors been over the past 2 weeks?

(1 = not at all consistent; 10 = highly consistent) \_\_\_\_\_

## Your WORK AND CAREER values

Record your key value reminder words for this area of your life:

---

Now reflect on your actions OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS. To what extent were your day-to-day actions consistent with your work/career values? For example, did you engage in behaviors that reflect how you choose to be in your work? Were your interactions with work colleagues values-consistent? Did you take any valued steps towards personal development in relation to work? Think about all your actions over the past couple of weeks related to your main value around work/career.

Actions that were more consistent with my main work/career value		Actions that were less consistent with my main work/career value

On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is this work/career value to you right now?

(1 = not at all important; 10 = very important) \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 to 10, how value-consistent have your work/career behaviors been over the past 2 weeks?

(1 = not at all consistent; 10 = highly consistent) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Your LEISURE TIME values**

Record your key value reminder words for this area of your life:

---

Now reflect on your actions OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS. To what extent were your day-to-day actions consistent with your recreation and leisure time values? For example, did you engage in behaviors that reflect how you choose to be in your leisure time? Did you pursue activities/hobbies that reflect how you want to be in your leisure time? Were some actions less consistent with your main leisure time value? Think about all your actions over the past couple of weeks related to your values around recreation and leisure time.

Actions that were more consistent with my main leisure time value		Actions that were less consistent with my main leisure time value

On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is this leisure time value to you right now?

(1 = not at all important; 10 = very important) \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 to 10, how value-consistent have your leisure time and recreation behaviors been over the past 2 weeks?

(1 = not at all consistent; 10 = highly consistent) \_\_\_\_\_

### Your PERSONAL GROWTH values

Record your key value reminder words for this area of your life:

---

Now reflect on your actions OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS. To what extent were your day-to-day actions consistent with your values around personal development, learning, and growth? If learning new things is important to you, did you pursue that value over the past two weeks? Did you seek out new knowledge or other growth experiences in a way that is value-consistent? Were some actions less consistent with your personal growth value? Think about all your actions over the past couple of weeks related to your values around personal development and growth.

Actions that were more consistent with my main personal growth value		Actions that were less consistent with my main personal growth value

On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is this personal growth value to you right now?

(1 = not at all important; 10 = very important)\_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 to 10, how value-consistent have your personal growth behaviors been over the past 2 weeks?

(1 = not at all consistent; 10 = highly consistent)\_\_\_\_\_

**Handout 8: HOME PRACTICE**  
**(To keep things going now that the program has finished!)**

You will hopefully have already made some good progress in developing a combination of mindfulness and values-based action skills. Please do not stop here! These are skills - if you keep using them they become stronger, more automatic, and more integrated into your daily life.

**HOME PRACTICE 1**

**ENGAGE MINDFULLY IN THREE VALUE-BASED ACTIONS OVER THE NEXT WEEK**

Instructions are exactly the same as before. Use your reminder strategies (e.g., wristband, or sticker on your phone) to remember to perform your valued actions, and pay attention to what happens before, during, and after. Use the exercise to become aware of any thoughts and feelings that pull you off course.

**HOME PRACTICE 2**

**WORK THROUGH THE WHOLE VALUES-BASED ACTION PROCESS ON YOUR OWN TIME**

Take away some of the blank handouts and continue defining your values in each area of your life. If your values are not well defined and familiar to you, they will not operate as a prominent guide to action. As you define your values, get into the habit of identifying a series of more concrete goals and actions that will help to bring your values to life. And maybe start becoming a little bolder! Gradually increase patterns of action that are guided by values. Keep on the lookout for new opportunities to bring your values to life. Practice engaging in personally valued actions even when unhelpful or difficult thoughts and feelings are showing up. Welcome your passengers along for the ride!

**HOME PRACTICE 3**

**MINDFULNESS PRACTICE**

Continue practicing **mindfulness of the breath or mindfulness of the body and breath** three times per week. Many people find it helps to continue with regular meditation practice throughout their lives.

Continue using **brief daily mindfulness** exercises – get into the habit of using the three steps to present moment awareness at regular intervals during the day.

Practice the **cartoon/ film voices technique** whenever you notice yourself being overly influenced by unhelpful thoughts.

Practice the **physicalizing** exercise when you notice yourself becoming wrapped up in a difficult feeling or mood.

**REMEMBER THAT MINDFULNESS IS LIKE A PSYCHOLOGICAL MUSCLE – IT DEVELOPS WITH REGULAR PRACTICE!**

*The Mindful and Effective Employee* Copyright Flaxman, Bond, Livheim, 2013 [www.mindfulemployee.com](http://www.mindfulemployee.com)

# Appendix 46

WAAQ											
Below you will find a list of statements. Please rate how true each statement is for you by circling a number next to it. Use the scale below to make your choice.											
1	2	3	4	5	6	7					
never true	very seldom true	seldom true	sometimes true	frequently true	almost always true	always true					
1. I am able to work effectively in spite of any personal worries that I have					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I can admit to my mistakes at work and still be successful					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I can still work very effectively, even if I am nervous about something					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Worries do not get in the way of my success					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I can perform as required, no matter how I feel					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I can work effectively, even when I doubt myself					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. My thoughts and feelings do not get in the way of my work					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<p><i>Thank you for completing this questionnaire</i></p> <p><b>(HIGHER SCORES INDICATE GREATER PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY.)</b></p> <p>Bond, F.W., Lloyd, J. &amp; Guenole, N. (2013). The work-related acceptance and action questionnaire (WAAQ): Initial psychometric findings and their implications for measuring psychological flexibility in specific contexts. <i>Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology</i>. doi: 10.1111/joop.12001</p> <p>© Frank W. Bond</p>											

## **PARTICIPANTS' TRANSCRIPTS**

## **PARTICIPANT 1 – DS FOR ACT INTERVENTION**

### **Session 1 – 11 June at 11am (1 hour 30 mins) at the house of the participant.**

- Participant was identified to have experienced bullying and have seen bullying done to others
  - o **Someone withholding information which affects your performance**
  - o **Having key areas of responsibility removed or replace with more trivial or unpleasant tasks**
  - o **Spreading of gossip and rumours about you**
  - o **Being ignored, excluded or being “Sent to Coventry”**
  - o **Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life**
  - o **Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job**
  - o **Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach**
  - o **Persistent criticism of your work and effort**
  - o **Having your opinions and views ignored**
  - o **Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm**
- In this session, the participant was told about the 3 separate sessions (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in consecutive weeks and 3<sup>rd</sup> session to be done in a months’ time)
- Participant was informed that the sessions are to expose him to the psychological and behavioural skills training
- Also mentioned to him the importance of practicing the skills in between the sessions as they are part of the training
- Showed him the two skills diagram and emphasised the relationship between mindfulness and also values based action

### **The Components of the Skills Training**

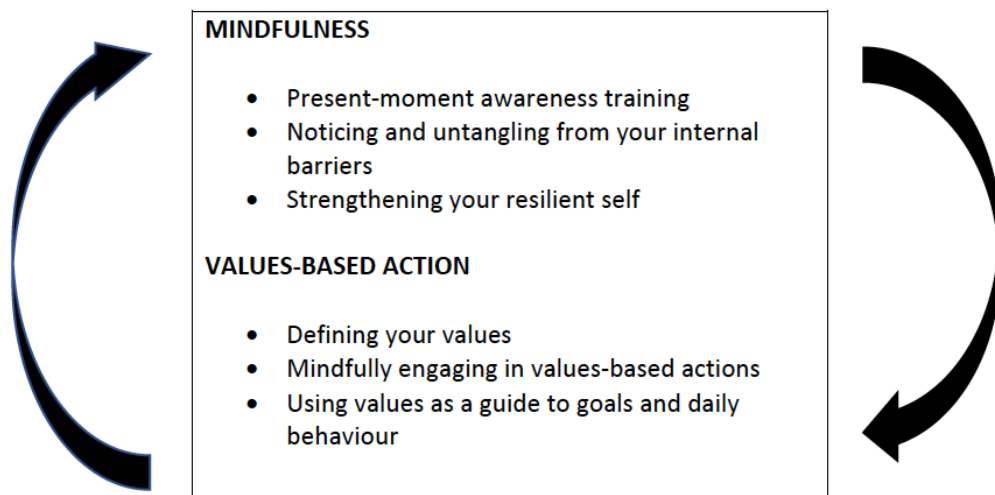
Participant was briefed on the components of the skills training. With the use of a Two Skills diagram (see Appendix 34), he was briefed about the relationship between mindfulness skills training and values-based actions.

The participant was told that both mindfulness and values based action worked together. He was told that in the three sessions, he would learn mindfulness exercises and would be putting them in practice as part of his home assignments. He was also told that after each session, he would be given home assignments to be completed before the next session.

To create awareness, mindfulness exercises such as the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise or the Raisin Exercise can be used. For this research, the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise.



## TWO SKILLS DIAGRAM



### Exercise 1

#### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 mins)**

In this exercise, the participant was asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture”*

The participant was asked to close his eyes. He was asked to breathe in through his nose and exhale out from his mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations on his toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). He was then asked to move his attention to any sensations or temperature change on his hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations on your toes and feet” (2 mins)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change on your hands and fingers” (2 mins)*

Encouraged participant to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. Encouraged participant to come back to the sensations when he has drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations” (2 mins)*

Next the participant was asked to put his focus on his abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the tummy with each breathe he took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your tummy” (2 mins)*

The participant was then asked to focus on his whole body and to feel the sensations throughout his body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body” (2 mins)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open his eyes and come back to the room at his own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room”*

### Debrief

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what he noticed during the exercise. Once he has shared his experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. Reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

- In the debrief, the participant shared about his experience.
  - o ‘It was good to be still and was able to focus on the sensations’
  - o ‘I was able to feel that one of my legs did go to sleep’
  - o ‘It was difficult when my mind was telling me ‘why am I sitting here doing this when I need to be productive’

### **Values and Values-Driven Actions**

In this part, participant learned about what values were and how they were important in helping to guide his daily behaviours.

The participant was asked what values meant to him.

*“What do values mean to you?”*

- o He stated, “Values are guiding principles that helps one to navigate in life, no end date”
- Asked Participant what goals are
  - o He stated, “Goals are achievable and has a date of completion’

All participants tend to mix up goals and values. Reiterated to participant that goals were achievable and have a completion date whereas values guide his daily behaviours. Participant was also asked what he would consider as internal or external barriers to prevent them from achieving his goals and values.

*“What would you consider as internal and external barriers that would prevent you from achieving your goals and values?”*

- He stated, “No time as external barrier and feeling lazy as internal barrier”
- Reiterated the points shared by the participant and told him
  - Values are guides to our daily behaviours and goals are indeed time stamped. Both types of barriers will prevent us from working towards the values.

#### Compass Metaphor – Goals and Values

To reiterate the difference between goals and values, the Compass Metaphor (Hayes et al, 1999, See Appendix 36) was used. The participant was asked to choose a direction from the Compass (that was to signify the Values). Once participant have chosen the direction for his Values, he was asked to identify landmarks (Short Term goals) along the road to his chosen direction. The participant was then asked to identify the next destination (Long Term goals). The participant was then asked what immediate steps he would take to walk towards his chosen directions.

*“Look at the compass and choose a direction, that would signify your values”*

*“Next please identify any landmarks along the road to your chosen direction, this will be your short term goals”*

*“Please identify the next destination along the road to your chosen direction, this will be your long term goals”*

*“What immediate steps would you take to walk towards your chosen directions, this would be your values based actions”*

#### Debrief

Participant was told that values based actions allow him to be aware of his values, his sense of purpose, life direction and meaning. Values based actions enforced values as powerful guide to life goals and actions. Participant was told that these actions would help to enforce values as inner compass to help them navigate through challenging times and would guide them to make important decisions. It was reiterated to the participant that actions which was guided by his values was unlikely to be influenced by unhelpful thoughts, feelings, moods, and behavioural habits.

## Value Cards

Participant was then presented with the values cards (See Appendix 35). Participant was instructed to choose from the values cards and classified them as many values that he wanted and grouped them into 3 categories: least important, moderately important and most important. From the most important category, he was to choose 5 top values.

*“Please look at these values cards, they are categorised as follow: caring for myself, connecting with others, challenging myself, valuing in the presence of difficulty. In each of the category there are 8 different values. You can choose as many values as you want from any of the categories”*

*“Once you have chosen the values, please put them into the following 3 categories: least important, moderately important and most important”*

*“When you have categorised the values accordingly, please choose 5 top values from the most important category”*

The participant was then presented with Handout 1 (See Appendix 37). Participant was presented with 5 Values (Life) Areas: Your Health Values, Your Relationship Values, Your Work and Career Values, Your Leisure Time Values, and Your Personal Growth Values. Participant was told to choose 1 Value Area from the 5. He was then asked to choose which of the 5 important values he has chosen from the values card and write them under his chosen Value Area. He was then asked to write a value statement and about 3 to 5 value reminder words for his chosen value (see Handout 1). After that he was asked to fill in Handout 2 (See Appendix 38) where he was required to indicate which Values (Life) Areas he has chosen, the value reminder words, the short term, medium and long term goals, values based actions. He was also required to write down any internal barriers that might prevent them from fulfilling his values goals and actions. He was instructed to do home practices (a mindfulness exercise and values-based actions) between session one and session two in Handout 3 (see Appendix 39). The one week gap between sessions one and two allowed participant to practise the mindfulness exercise and values-based actions (p44, Flaxman, Bond & Liveheim, 2013).

### Handout 1

*“Please choose which Value Area you would like to work on for the coming week”*

*“Decide which of your top 5 value that you would like to work on for the coming week”*

*“Based on the value you have chosen for the Value Area, please write down a value statement and about 3 to 5 reminder words for that chosen value”*

## Handout 2

*“Under the Value column, please indicate the Value Area and the Value you would be working on for the coming week”*

*“Please also write down the reminder words for the chosen value”*

*“Under the Goals column, please write down the short term goals, medium term goals and long term goals”*  
*“Under the Actions column, please write 3 value based actions that you would be working on for the coming week”*

Before briefing the Home Practices, the participant was reminded about the Two Skills Diagram (Appendix 34). The participant was also introduced to a Two Sheets of Paper Technique (see Appendix 40). One of sheets have the word “VALUE” and the other with “UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS”. The purpose of showing the two papers to the participant was to reiterate that the training that he has gone through was to help him work towards his VALUES despite the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS. The point was to accept the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS in the background and work towards his values.

*“You will see before you two sheets of paper. One with the word VALUES and the other with the words UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS. The purpose of the training you have gone through was to help you work towards your VALUES (the VALUES sheet of paper was moved slightly to the front while the other sheet of paper was moved slightly behind) and to accept the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS in the background”*

After the participant was presented with the Two Sheets of Paper Techniques, he was briefed on the Home Practices 1 and 2.

### **Home Practices 1 and 2**

For Home Practice 1, the participant was asked to engage mindfully on the three valued actions that he would be performing over the following week. He was encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies. He was encouraged to notice what happened when he performed the chosen actions. He was required to write down any thoughts, feelings that would show up before, during and after he has performed each action. He was also asked to take notice of how others would respond and any consequences of his actions.

*“For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three valued based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice”*

*“Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions”*

*“Do take notice of how others responded to your actions and also was there any consequences to your actions”*

For Home Practice 2, the participant was asked to take about 10 minutes to practice mindfulness breathing exercise. He was asked to record any observations and comments.

*“For home practice 2, please spend about 10 minutes to practice mindfulness breathing exercise. You can use the Brief Body and Breathe Awareness Exercise for this practice”*

Once the instructions for the home practices was explained, the first session ended with the participant and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session.

### **Session 2 – 18 June at 11am (1 hour 30 mins) at the house of the participant.**

In this session, the researcher would review the participant's home practices and the participant would continue to learn skills to help him work towards his values. The skills were taught using five exercises: Monsters in the Bus (see Appendix 41), Defusion Technique (see Appendix 42), Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion and Physicalizing exercise, to help the participant learn psychological acceptance and perspective thinking. Before all these, to kick off session 2, the participant was asked to do the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise.

#### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 mins)**

In this exercise, the participant was asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture”*

The participant was asked to close his eyes. He was asked to breathe in through his nose and exhale out from his mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations on his toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). He is then asked to move his attention to any sensations or temperature change on his hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations on your toes and feet” (2 mins)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change on your hands and fingers” (2 mins)*

Encouraged participant to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. Encouraged participant to come back to the sensations when he had drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations” (2 mins)*

Next the participant was asked to put his focus on his abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the tummy with each breathe he took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your tummy” (2 mins)*

The participant was then asked to focus on his whole body and to feel the sensations throughout his body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body” (2 mins)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open his eyes and come back to the room at his own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room”*

*“Share with me your experience.”*

### Debrief

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what he noticed during the exercise. Once he has shared his experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. Reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

After the participant shared about his experience, a debrief was done

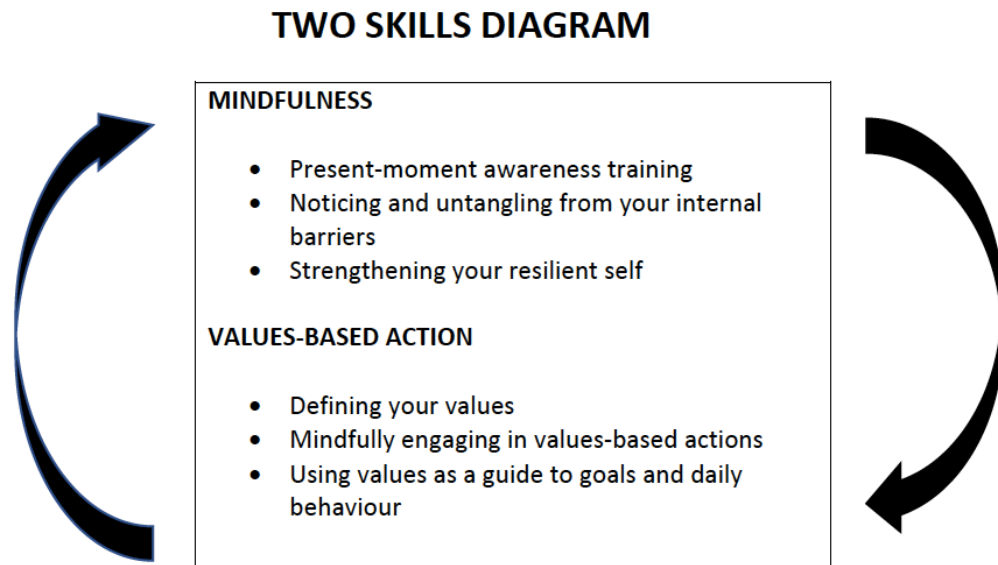
- “It was good to be able to be still and focus on the breathing.”

### **Reviewing of Home Practices**

In session two, participant’ home practices were reviewed. The researcher was able to determine whether participant had applied the skills he had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries and reinforce concepts of values and values-based actions.

## Home Practice 1 – Values Based Actions

Using the Two Skills Diagram, reiterated to the participant the relationship between mindfulness and values based actions. Checked with the participant which values based action he had performed, what he had noticed before, during and after he had performed the actions. He was also asked to share what values based actions he did not perform. The participant was also asked to share internal and external barriers that prevented them to perform the values based actions.



“Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values based actions.”

“Please share with me what was the values based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?”

“Were there any values based actions that you did not perform?”

“What was the internal and external barriers that have prevented you from performing the values based actions?”

The participant shared his experience

- Internal barriers – He knew that he needed to pause but mind told him to ‘screw it.’ “I was only able to do 2 of the values based action on Day 4 and Day 6.” I could have been more robust.”
- External barriers – too concerned about others, their capability to complete tasks



## Home Practice 2 – Mindfulness Exercise

Participant was asked about his experience with regards to the mindfulness exercise, how much time he spent each day for the mindfulness exercise, his observations and comments.

*“Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercise”*

*“How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?”*

*“What was your observations?”*

- Participant shared that he attempted 3 times to do the mindfulness exercise (Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise).
- Internal barriers included, “what are the steps to do the tasks – home exercises’
- External barriers included, “Work priorities over the need to complete the tasks’
- Was able to focus on awareness (breathe and body sensations) using mobile apps to remind him to breathe. He was able to pause and breathe sometimes for 1 min when reminded by app. (For example, when reading an email)
- The mindfulness exercise allows him to relax and have clearer thoughts
- Use prayer as a form of mindfulness exercise to focus on present
- Shared with participants other ways of being mindful such as brisk walk, hiking, mindful eating.

## Exercise 1 - Monsters (Passengers) in the Bus

The purpose of this exercise was to teach the participant about psychological acceptance. The participant was shown a picture with monsters (passengers) in the bus. The participant was told that he was the driver of the Bus of Life and the monsters (passengers) on the bus represented his thoughts, feelings, moods and urges. The participant was told that as the driver, his chosen direction was to go towards his chosen values and the passengers was there to distract him from going towards his values. Participant was asked what he would do in such a situation.

*“This is a picture we call monsters in the bus. You are the driver of this Bus of Life and the monsters represent your thoughts, feelings, moods and urges. As the driver, you have a chosen direction to go towards your values, but the monsters are here to distract you from going towards your values. What would you do in this situation?”*

Participant said that, ‘I would chase them out of the bus! But I know that is not going to work though’

### Debrief

Explained to the participant that trying to get rid of the passengers would be futile. The passengers would always try to distract and influence his actions. Therefore, the participant would have to be aware of the presence of the passengers but continue to proceed to move towards his values.

## **Exercise 2 - Defusion Technique**

The purpose of this skill (defusion technique) was to help participant become aware of the unhelpful thoughts, emotions and moods he would experience and not to be entangled by them. The researcher highlighted the reasons for untangling oneself from thoughts, emotions and moods. The researcher explained to the participant: 1) how internal barriers (thoughts, emotions and moods) could cripple his well-being, 2) how the mind in the course of trying to protect them would end up being unhelpful as it would start to judge them, and 3) how when he was too caught up with his mind's output would miss experiencing the present (this was to enforce mindfulness). The participant was then asked to write down unhelpful thoughts on Handout 4 (see Appendix 42), that have prevented them from pursuing his values based actions or goals.

*“Often we get caught up with our thoughts, emotions and moods and when we spend too much time on them, we tend to lose out on the experience of the present”*

*“Our mind will constantly be trying to help us in making us ruminate but that can be unhelpful as the mind will then start to judge us”*

*“Please use the handout 4 and write down some of the unhelpful thought that have prevented you from pursuing your values based actions or goals”*

### **Debrief**

Once the participant has identified the unhelpful thoughts, the researcher reiterated the point that the purpose was to be aware of those unhelpful thoughts, emotions and moods but not to attempt to get rid of them.

## **Exercise 3 – Cartoon Voice Technique**

The purpose of using this technique was to create awareness about negative thoughts, emotions and moods as just what they were as a bit of a language (p 60, Harris, 2008) and not to take them too seriously. Using a cartoon voice and repeating the negative thoughts, emotions and moods, participant would be able to hear them in a different voice and they would lose their impact.

The participant was asked to take one of the unhelpful thoughts that he had labelled in the earlier exercise and focus on the impact of the that unhelpful thought. He was then asked to choose a cartoon voice. The participant was then asked to hear the unhelpful thought through the voice of the cartoon voice he has chosen. The participant was then asked to look at the unhelpful thoughts and notice any impact. Once the participant has shared his experience, the researcher reiterated the importance of being aware of the negative thought and that it was merely language.

*“From the negative thoughts you have identified earlier, focus on one of them and its impact.”*

*“Next please choose a cartoon character you like and hear that negative thought through the voice of the cartoon character.”*

*“Focus on the negative thoughts and notice any impact.”*

*“The purpose of this technique is to help you to recognise and be aware of negative thoughts and He are merely words, not to be take them too seriously.”*

### Debrief

Participant was taught how to use a cartoon voice to repeat the unhelpful thoughts he had. The purpose of using the cartoon voice was to let the participant realised that the unhelpful thoughts, emotions or moods were just part of a language and that by repeating the unhelpful thoughts, emotions and moods in a cartoon voice, they would lose their impact.

The participant chose Marcie from Charlie Brown. He shared that using the cartoon voice actually exacerbated the unhelpful thoughts and reinforced the unhelpful thoughts. Acknowledged his experience and reiterated awareness of the negative thought. While this was not the intended result, it was good to link it to the next defusion techniques

### **Exercise 4 – Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion (Harris 2009)**

This exercise was used to demonstrate fusion and defusion and helped participant to be aware and be able to watch his thoughts. The participant was asked to write down an unhelpful thought as big as possible to cover a piece of paper. Once he has done so, he was asked to hold the paper tightly and held it up touching his nose. The participant was asked to look passed the paper (his unhelpful thought) at his surroundings. The participant was asked to describe the experience. He was then asked to move the paper slightly away from his nose and to hold the paper less tightly. The participant was asked to describe any difference between the two perspectives. He replied that now he could see the unhelpful thought and his surroundings. Next the participant was asked to fully stretched out his arms still holding the paper and hold it till his arms ache. Once he was no longer able to hold up the paper, he was asked to put the paper down on his lap. The participant was then asked about his experience.

*“Please think of an unhelpful thought and write it as big as possible to cover the piece of paper.”*

*“Please hold up the paper and place it touching your nose and then look pass the paper at your surroundings.”*

*Participant: “It is difficult, and I cannot see anything”*

“Now move the paper slightly away from your nose and tell me what you see?”

*Participant: “I can see the unhelpful thought clearer, but I am also able to see the surroundings”*

“Still holding your paper stretch your arm fully. Once you feel that your arms are aching, put your arms down and place them on your lap”

*Participant: “I feel very tired holding the paper”.*

*Participant: “I feel better now, I could see what is in front of me, but I know that the paper (unhelpful thoughts) is still here”*

Once the participant shared his experience, he was debriefed.

### Debrief

The participant was told that it was important to be aware of the unhelpful thoughts but to be mindful not to spend too much time on these thoughts as this would result in them missing out on things that was happening around them (when he put the paper touching his nose which resulted in him not being able to be in the moment). He would begin to see his surroundings and notice his thoughts when he put the paper slightly away from his nose (this was to create a healthy psychological distance from the unhealthy thoughts). He would learn to accept and be aware of the unhelpful thoughts but not actively trying to fight them when he put the paper down on his laps. This move was meant to allow the participant to experience unhelpful thoughts and be present at the moment, that is to be defusing from his unhelpful thoughts. (Hayes et al, 1999; Harris, 2009)

### **Exercise 5 - Physicalizing Exercise**

The purpose of teaching the participant this physicalizing exercise was to cultivate emotional acceptance skills. Similar to the defusion exercise before, this exercise was meant to help the participant to create a psychological distance between themselves and his emotions, moods and thoughts. The exercise sought to encourage the participant to open up about a uncomfortable emotion and notice the impact of the emotion as physical sensations that was experienced throughout his body. The participant was asked to objectify the feeling/sensation he experienced as an object out of his body. He was then asked to welcome the objectified feeling back to his body, as a form of acceptance of that feeling.

“Please close your eyes and notice your body sensations and feeling as you breathe in and out. To focus on the sensations in your toes , hands tummy and the whole body. When your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back and notice the sensations.”

“Now I would like you to think of a stressful event, situation or a person and think on it for a few minutes. While you are doing this, be aware of any changes taking place in your body, for example feelings or physical reaction”

“Identify where the feeling or physical reaction and then draw an imaginary line across the feeling. Be curious about this feeling as if it the first time you are encountering them.”

“Please imaging the feeling as a physical object and it has now popped out of your body.”

“The feeling is now outside your body, look at the feeling and now give it a shape.. Next give it a colour. Then give it a weight.”

“Now take a step back and look at this object.”

“Next welcome the object now back to your body. Notice where the object has settled and draw an imaginary line.”

“Carry on focusing on your breathing. Turn your awareness now to your tummy and then the whole body. Taking your last breath in and out, when you are ready return to the room and open your eyes.”

### Debrief

The participant was asked to share his experience in this physicalizing exercise. The participant was asked what the feeling was and the form it took as an object, its shape and weight. To reiterate that it was important to be able to notice feeling or emotion for what it actually was and where it can reside in the body. The purpose of objectifying the feeling or emotion and popping it out of the body was intended to create a healthy psychological distance between the person and his/her feeling and emotions. To reinforce psychological distance, the researcher did a quick hand as emotions exercise. Together with the participant, the researcher used his hands as emotions and covered his eyes. This was to indicate that as a person was embroiled in his or her feelings/emotions, he or she would find it difficult to look beyond them. But by moving the hands slightly away, this created a psychological distance that in turn provided a mindful perspective of the feelings/emotions.

Participant shared his experience.

- His object was a brown stone. He could see the stone and understood the purpose of the exercise to create a distance from the sensation and his own experience of the sensation

Reinforce the psychological distance by getting participant to do the hand as emotions exercise. Together with the participant, the researcher used the hand as emotions and covered my eyes. This is to indicate that when we are embroiled in the emotions, we are not able to look beyond them. By moving the hands slightly away, this creates psychological distance that is providing a mindful perspective of the emotions.

### Home Practices 1, 2 and 3 (Handout 6 – Appendix 43)

For Home Practice 1, the participant was asked to engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that he would be performing over the following week. He was encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies. He was encouraged to notice what happened when he performed the chosen actions. He was required to write down any thoughts and feelings that would show up before, during and after he has performed each action. He was also asked to take notice of how others responded and any consequences of his actions.

*“For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice.”*

*“Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions.”*

*“Do take notice of how others respond to your actions and also whether there are any consequences to your actions.”*

For Home Practice 2, the participant was asked to achieve four values-based goals before Session 3. He was asked to focus on his short term goals.

*“For home practice 2, please look at the four short term goals you have recorded in Session 2. Please achieve these goals. Stay present and notice what happens as you pursue these goals.”*

For Home Practice 3, the participant was asked to take about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. He was asked to record any observations and comments.

*“For home practice 3, please spend about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. You can use the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise for this practice. You will be given 4 copies to record your practice.”*

The participant was also given Handout 6 (See Appendix 43). This handout was meant to help participant, if he preferred, to visualize his behavioural process. The squiggly line diagonally up the centre of the page signified that to achieve a values-based direction, the process to be followed would be filled with twists and turns. The rectangular boxes were used for values-based actions and the empty scrolls represented the values-based goals the participants would like to achieve.

Once the instructions for the home practices had been explained, the second session ended with the participant and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session. The next session was scheduled to take place one month later.

### **Session 3 – 18 July 2017, 7pm (1 hour 30 mins) at Participant’s home (after 4 weeks)**

In session three, the participant’s home practices for the whole month were reviewed. The researcher reviewed the mindfulness exercises and values-based actions. In doing so, the researcher was able to see whether the participant had used the skills he had learned and had progressed in his values-based actions. Similarly, queries were clarified, and concepts were reinforced.

In this session, participant was asked to answer only the WAAQ questionnaire. This was to determine whether the participant’s psychological flexibility scores have changed after the training sessions. In addition, the researcher conducted a short interview to understand how the participant viewed the whole skills training process. To encourage him to carry on practising the new acquired skills, the participant was presented with home practices for further practice (Handouts 7 and 8 – see Appendices 44 and 45). To start this session, the participant was led to do a shorter version of the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes). This was to create awareness and mindfulness.

How was your practice?

#### **Debrief**

Participant: *“It was okay. I think I should have done more.”*

#### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes)**

In this exercise, the participants were asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.”*

The participant was asked to close their eyes. He was asked to breathe in through their nose and exhale out from his mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth.”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations in his toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). He was then asked to move his attention to any sensations or temperature change in his hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations in your toes and feet.” (1 minute)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change in your hands and fingers.” (1 minute)*

The participant was asked to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. The participant was asked to come back to the sensations when he had drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations.” (1 minute)*

Next the participant was asked to put his focus on his abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the abdomen with each breath he took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your abdomen.” (1 minute)*

The participant was then asked to focus on his whole body and to feel the sensations throughout his body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body.” (1 minute)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open his eyes and come back to the room in his own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room.”*

*“Share with me your experience.”*

After the participant had shared his experience, a debrief was done.

### Debrief

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what he noticed during the exercise. Once he has shared their experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. It was reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

Participant shared about his experience

- *“My mind slow down and concentrated on the breathing”*
- *“My mind was wandering thinking about what to have for lunch and yoga class at 3pm but I push the thoughts away and concentrate on the breathing”*



## **Review of Home Practices**

The purpose of reviewing the home practice was to enable the researcher to determine whether participant had applied the skills he had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries pertaining to the home practices, skills learned and reinforce the concepts of values and values-based actions.

### **Home Practice 1 – Values Based Actions**

Using the Two Skills Diagram (see Appendix 34), the relationship between mindfulness and values-based actions was reiterated to the participant. The researcher checked with the participant which values-based actions he had performed, what he had noticed before, during and after he had performed the actions. He was asked to share what values-based actions he has not performed. The participant was also asked to share internal and external barriers that prevented him from performing his values-based actions.

*“Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values based actions.”*

*“Please share with me what were values-based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?”*

*“Were there any value- based actions that you did not perform?”*

*“What were the internal and external barriers that prevented you from performing the values-based actions?”*

After the participant had completed his sharing and the Home Practice 1 had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to review the Home Practice 2.

Participant: *“The exercises of stepping back and thinking about things differently was for me a very welcome change” so thank you for that*

Participant: *“My impressions about doing this uh is that ultimately it will be helpful for me. I did not perform one values-based action that is to not to be to extravagant.”*

## **Home Practice 2 – Four Value-Based Goals**

Participant was asked whether he had achieved performing the four value-based goals. He was asked to share what he had noticed when he pursued the goals.

*“I would like to check whether you did achieve the four values-based goals?”*

*“What did you notice when you were pursuing the goals?”*

Participant – *“I have completed only one”*

Asked participant whether he encountered any difficulties doing the values-based action

Participant – *No*

After the participant had completed his sharing and the Home Practice 2 had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to review the Home Practice 3.

## **Home Practice 3 – Mindfulness Exercise**

Participant was asked about his experience with regards to the mindfulness exercises, how much time he had spent each day for the mindfulness exercise, their observations, and comments.

*“Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercises.”*

*“How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?”*

*“What were your observations?”*

Participants – *“I only did 3 days of breathing exercise for the first week. I felt calmer and more focused.”*

When the participant had finished sharing and the Home Practice 3 had been reviewed. The researcher proceeded to the next stage of the session – **Values Consistency Exercise**.

## **Values Consistency Exercise – Handout 7 (see Appendix 44)**

After reviewing the home practices, the participant was asked to fill in Handout 7. The purpose of doing this was to see whether how value consistent the participant had been for the past 1 month.

After he had completed filling up Handout 7, the researcher went through the information with the participant. The researcher asked the participant about the areas which were not consistent with his values, and their reasons for that. This allowed the researcher to reinforce the concepts and skills learned in previous sessions.

*“Thank you for filling up Handout 7, let us go through the handout.”*

*“There were some areas you have marked not consistent with your values. Could you share with me why this is so?”*

After the participant had completed Handout 7, the researcher proceeded to administer the WAAQ.

**WAAQ (see pages 8 and 9 of Appendix 29)**

As stated, the purpose of asking the participants to fill this questionnaire was to see whether his psychological flexibility had changed after the skills learning sessions and home practices. The participant was asked to answer the 7 questions in the questionnaire – WAAQ.

*“I would like to ask you 7 statements and please answer them as truthfully as you can.”*

*“Statement 1 – I am able to work effectively in spite of any personal worries that I have. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 2 – I can admit to my mistakes at work and still be successful.*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 3 – I can still work very effectively even if I am nervous about something.*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 4 – Worries do not get in the way of my success. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 5 – I can perform as required no matter how I feel. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 6 – I can work effectively even when I doubt myself. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 7 – My thoughts and feelings do not get in the way of my work. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

After the participant had completed the 7 statements, he was asked how the processes had helped them with regards to negative thoughts and emotions.

*“Please share with me how the processes have helped you with regards to negative thoughts and emotions.”*

Participant - *“As I mentioned that I don’t feel that I have put it into application in many instances in the past 3 weeks. But I understood it and saw the value to it.”*

Once the participants had shared his experiences, the researcher did a research debrief.

### **Research Debrief**

The research debrief was intended to let the participant know the purpose of the skills training sessions and how the skills could help individuals who had been exposed to workplace bullying.

The researcher explained the strategies used by victims of workplace bullying and how they could only be useful to a certain extent. For example, when victims were not able to seek redress, they could resort to counterproductive behaviours such as retaliation or being absent from work. If the strategies used were unsuccessful, victims might choose to leave. However, while leaving can help victims to stop bullying, victims continue to carry with them the emotional baggage of that experience, which can affect their psychological well-being. This could include rumination of the bullying experience and self-blame. In the workplace bullying literature, to date, there is no research focusing on how individuals can help themselves when they are being bullied (self-intervention).

The skills training sessions formed part of the self-intervention. The skills learned from the sessions cover the six core processes of the therapy Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. A brief explanation of the six processes were explained to the participants. The researcher then linked the skills learned to the bullying experiences the participant had gone through. This was done to allow the participants to see how the skills could be used to help him manage the negative thoughts and emotions he might have felt or continued to be feeling due to his exposure to bullying.

*“Thank you for participating in all the sessions. I would like to take this opportunity to explain to you the purpose of my research.”*

*“As you know, workplace bullying is unavoidable and often people will use various ways to counteract it. These could be direct or indirect ways. For example, an individual can choose to resort to behaving counterproductively, such as by retaliation or by being absent from work. However, when these strategies do not work, an individual may choose to leave the organisation. Although these strategies do provide a*

*resolution for an individual, he or she would leave the organization carrying the baggage of the bullying experience and this can often impact on their psychological well-being. That is, the individual could spend time ruminating about their bullying experience and blame himself or herself for what had happened.”*

*“Workplace bullying research to date has not address what bullied individuals could do to help themselves (self-intervention).”*

*“That is why the main focus of this research is to find a way to help bullied individuals.”*

*“The skills training sessions are part of the six processes of the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. The six processes are: acceptance, cognitive defusion, self as context, present, values and committed actions. The six processes enable an individual to become psychologically flexible, that is not to get stuck in negative thoughts, emotions, or moods, but instead to look at what matters to him or her (values) and to spend time working towards that.”*

*“The mindfulness exercise allows us to be aware of our surroundings, how we can be affected physically and physiologically when we are caught up with negative thoughts, emotions, and moods.” (Self-Awareness)*

*“Monsters in the Bus, Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Defusion/Fusion Exercise and Physicalizing Exercise help an individual to accept and defuse negative thoughts, emotions, and moods. In using these, an individual will learn to create a psychological distance between himself and herself and the negative thoughts, emotions and moods. (self-as-context, a form of perspective taking)*

*“Home practices of stating values and values-based actions encourage individuals to use the skills of acceptance, defusion and perspective taking to work towards their values-based goals.”*

*“When applying these skills in the context of workplace bullying, an individual will learn not to let the bullying experience deter him or her from working towards his or her important values. So instead of trying hard to fight the bullying or the emotions, the individual will focus on what are the best ways to counteract the bullying (values- based action) and not let negative thoughts, emotions and moods derail him or her from the values.”*

Once the research debrief was completed, the researcher encouraged the participant to continue the home practices. The participant was given Handout 8 (see Appendix 45). The participant was told to follow the previous instructions that were given for the home practices if he has decided to carry on.

*“Thank you once again for participating in this research. I would like to give you Handout 8. Although your participation in this research has ended, I would encourage you to carry on doing the home practices that are contained in Handout 8. You can use the previous instructions to help you continue your home practices.”*

To conclude the session, the participant was thanked again for his participation. He was assured that all data collected would only be used for this research and would be anonymised. He was also told that should he decide not to have his data used for this research, he would need to contact the researcher.

## **PARTICIPANT 2 - CH FOR ACT INTERVENTION**

### **Session 1 – 1 July 2017 at 4:45pm (1 hour 30 mins) at the house of the participant.**

- Participant was identified to have experienced bullying and have seen bullying done to others
  - **Someone withholding information which affects your performance**
  - **Spreading of gossip and rumours about you**
  - **Being ignored, excluded or being “Sent to Coventry”**
  - **Being ordered to do work below your level of competence**
  - **Having insulting/offensive remarks made about you person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes/your private life**
  - **Being shouted at /being the target of spontaneous anger**
  - **Repeated reminders of your errors/mistakes**
  - **Being ignored/facing a hostile reaction when you approach**
  - **Having your opinions/views ignored**
  - **Practical jokes carried out by people you don’t get on with**
  - **Being given tasks with unreasonable/impossible targets/deadlines**
  - **Having allegations made against you**
  - **Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm**
- In this session, the participant was told about the 3 separate sessions (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in consecutive weeks and 3<sup>rd</sup> session to be done in a month’s time)
- Participant was informed that the sessions are to expose him to the psychological and behavioural skills training
- Also mentioned to him the importance of practicing the skills in between the sessions as they are part of the training
- Showed him the two skills diagram and emphasised the relationship between mindfulness and also values based action

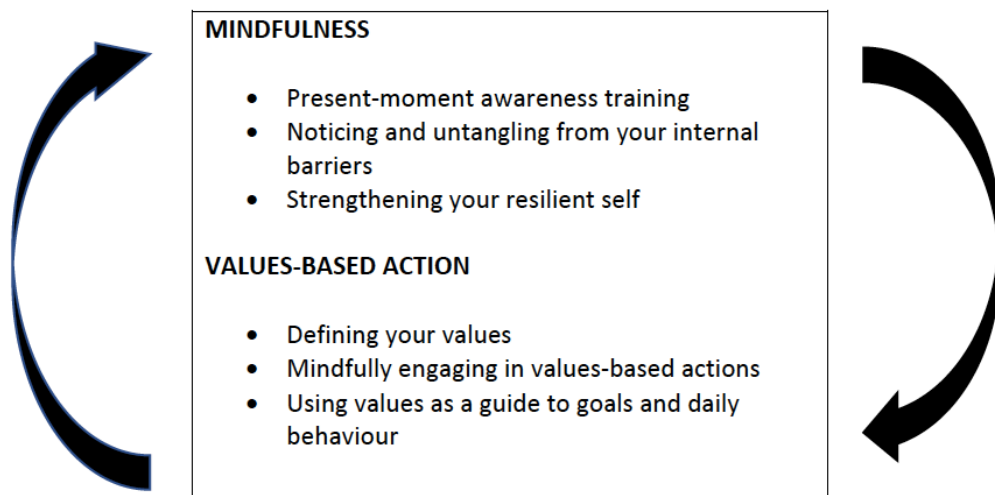
### **The Components of the Skills Training**

Participant was briefed on the components of the skills training. With the use of a Two Skills diagram (see Appendix 34), he was briefed about the relationship between mindfulness skills training and values-based actions.

The participant was told that both mindfulness and values based action worked together. He was told that in the three sessions, he would learn mindfulness exercises and would be putting them in practice as part of his home assignments. He was also told that after each session, he would be given home assignments to be completed before the next session.

To create awareness, mindfulness exercises such as the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise or the Raisin Exercise can be used. For this research, the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise.

## TWO SKILLS DIAGRAM



### Exercise 1

#### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 mins)**

In this exercise, the participant was asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture”*

The participant was asked to close his eyes. He was asked to breathe in through his nose and exhale out from his mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations on his toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). He was then asked to move his attention to any sensations or temperature change on his hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations on your toes and feet” (2 mins)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change on your hands and fingers” (2 mins)*

Encouraged participant to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. Encouraged participant to come back to the sensations when he has drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations” (2 mins)*



Next the participant was asked to put his focus on his abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the tummy with each breathe he took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your tummy” (2 mins)*

The participant was then asked to focus on his whole body and to feel the sensations throughout his body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body” (2 mins)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open his eyes and come back to the room at his own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room”*

### Debrief

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what he noticed during the exercise. Once he has shared his experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. Reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

- In the debrief, the participant shared about his experience.
  - o ‘I did not notice anything with regards to the feet’
  - o ‘I did focus on my fingers and also the whole body’
  - o I have done mindfulness before and I am not sure about it. I have done ‘neigong’ and ‘yoga’ and also able to be at peace

### **Values and Values-Driven Actions**

In this part, participant learned about what values were and how they were important in helping to guide his daily behaviours.

The participant was asked what values meant to them.

*“What do values mean to you?”*

Participant found it difficult to understand what Values meant to him. So, asked him what was important to him. He mentioned that Good Health and Feeling Good. So, solicited an answer as to what would have helped him to work towards Good Health and Feeling Good. He mentioned exercise and good diet. Used this example to explain about values (Good health and Feeling Good) and Goals (Exercise and Good diet). Further the discussion about how he will maintain Good Diet and Exercise, he mentioned about careful about the fruits he used for his smoothie in the morning and also do more spin classes and yoga.

All participants tend to mix up goals and values. Reiterated to participant that goals were achievable and have a completion date whereas values guide his daily behaviours. Participant was also asked what he would considered as internal or external barriers to prevent him from achieving his goals and values.

*“What would you considered as internal and external barriers that would prevent you from achieving your goals and values?”*

- He stated, “Busy schedule as an external barrier’
- Reiterated the points shared by the participant and told him
  - Values are guides to our daily behaviours and goals are indeed time stamped. Both types of barriers will prevent us from working towards the values.

#### Compass Metaphor – Goals and Values

To reiterate the difference between goals and values, the Compass Metaphor (Hayes et al, 1999, See Appendix 36) was used. The participant was asked to choose a direction from the Compass (that was to signify the Values). Once participant has chosen the direction for his Values, he was asked to identify landmarks (Short Term goals) along the road to his chosen direction. The participant was then asked to identify the next destination (Long Term goals). The participant was then asked what immediate steps he would take to walk towards his chosen directions.

*“Look at the compass and choose a direction, that would signify your values”*

*“Next please identify any landmarks along the road to your chosen direction, this will be your short-term goals”*

*“Please identify the next destination along the road to your chosen direction, this will be your long-term goals”*

*“What immediate steps would you take to walk towards your chosen directions, this would be your values-based actions”*

#### Debrief

Participant was told that values-based actions allow them to be aware of his values, his sense of purpose, life direction and meaning. Values based actions enforced values as powerful guide to life goals and actions. Participant was told that these actions would help to enforce values as inner compass to help them navigate through challenging times and would guide them to make important decisions. It was reiterated to the participant that actions which was guided by his values was unlikely to be influenced by unhelpful thoughts, feelings, moods, and behavioural habits.

#### **Value Cards**

Participant was then presented with the values cards (See Appendix 35). Participant was instructed to choose from the values cards and classified them as many values that he wanted and grouped them into 3 categories: least important, moderately important and most important. From the most important category, he was to choose 5 top values.

*“Please look at these values cards, they are categorised as follow: caring for myself, connecting with others, challenging myself, valuing in the presence of difficulty. In each of the category there are 8 different values. You can choose as many values as you want from any of the categories”*

*“Once you have chosen the values, please put them into the following 3 categories: least important, moderately important and most important”*

*“When you have categorised the values accordingly, please choose 5 top values from the most important category”*

The participant was then presented with Handout 1 (See Appendix 37). Participant was presented with 5 Values (Life) Areas: Your Health Values, Your Relationship Values, Your Work and Career Values, Your Leisure Time Values, and Your Personal Growth Values. Participant was told to choose 1 Value Area from the 5. He was then asked to choose which of the 5 important values he has chosen from the values card and write them under his chosen Value Area. He was then asked to write a value statement and about 3 to 5 value reminder words for his chosen value (see Handout 1). After that he was asked to fill in Handout 2 (See Appendix 38) where he was required to indicate which Values (Life) Areas he has chosen, the value reminder words, the short term, medium and long term goals, values based actions. He was also required to write down any internal barriers that might prevent them from fulfilling his values goals and actions. He was instructed to do home practices (a mindfulness exercise and values-based actions) between session one and session two in Handout 3 (see Appendix 39). The one week gap between sessions one and two allowed participant to practise the mindfulness exercise and values-based actions (p44, Flaxman, Bond & Liveheim, 2013).

#### Handout 1

*“Please choose which Value Area you would like to work on for the coming week”*

*“Decide which of your top 5 value that you would like to work on for the coming week”*

*“Based on the value you have chosen for the Value Area, please write down a value statement and about 3 to 5 reminder words for that chosen value”*

#### Handout 2

*“Under the Value column, please indicate the Value Area and the Value you would be working on for the coming week”*

*“Please also write down the reminder words for the chosen value”*

*“Under the Goals column, please write down the short term goals, medium term goals and long term goals”*

*“Under the Actions column, please write 3 value based actions that you would be working on for the coming week”*

Before briefing the Home Practices, the participant was reminded about the Two Skills Diagram (Appendix 34). The participant was also introduced to a Two Sheets of Paper Technique (see Appendix 40). One of sheets have the word “VALUE” and the other with “UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS”. The purpose of showing the two papers to the participant was to reiterate that the training that He have gone through was to help them work towards his VALUES despite the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS. The point was to accept the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS in the background and work towards his values.

*“You will see before you two sheets of paper. One with the word VALUES and the other with the words UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS. The purpose of the training you have gone through was to help you work towards your VALUES (the VALUES sheet of paper was moved slightly to the front while the other sheet of paper was moved slightly behind) and to accept the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS in the background”*

After the participant was presented with the Two Sheets of Paper Techniques, he was briefed on the Home Practices 1 and 2.

### **Home Practices 1 and 2**

For Home Practice 1, the participant was asked to engage mindfully on the three valued actions that he would be performing over the following week. He was encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies. He was encouraged to notice what happens when He perform the chosen actions. He was required to write down any thoughts, feelings that would show up before, during and after he have performed each action. He was also asked to take notice of how others would respond and any consequences of his actions.

*“For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three valued based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice”*

*“Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions”*

*“Do take notice of how others responded to your actions and also was there any consequences to your actions”*

For Home Practice 2, the participant was asked to take about 10 minutes to practice mindfulness breathing exercise. He was asked to record any observations and comments.

*“For home practice 2, please spend about 10 minutes to practice mindfulness breathing exercise. You can use the Brief Body and Breathe Awareness Exercise for this practice”*

Once the instructions for the home practices was explained, the first session ended with the participant and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session.

**Session 2 – 8 July 2017 at 7pm (1 hour 30 mins) at the house of the participant.**

In this session, the researcher would review the participant's home practices and the participant would continue to learn skills to help him work towards his values. The skills were taught using five exercises: Monsters in the Bus (see Appendix 41), Defusion Technique (see Appendix 42), Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion and Physicalizing exercise, to help the participant learn psychological acceptance and perspective thinking. Before all these, to kick off session 2, the participant was asked to do the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise.

**Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 mins)**

In this exercise, the participant was asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture”*

The participant was asked to close his eyes. He was asked to breathe in through his nose and exhale out from his mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations on his toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). He is then asked to move his attention to any sensations or temperature change on his hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations on your toes and feet” (2 mins)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change on your hands and fingers” (2 mins)*

Encouraged participant to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. Encouraged participant to come back to the sensations when he has drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations” (2 mins)*

Next the participant was asked to put his focus on his abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the tummy with each breathe he took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your tummy” (2 mins)*

The participant was then asked to focus on his whole body and to feel the sensations throughout his body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body” (2 mins)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open his eyes and come back to the room at his own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room”*

*“Share with me your experience.”*

### Debrief

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what he noticed during the exercise. Once he has shared his experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. Reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

After the participant shared about his experience, a debrief was done

- “Thoughts come and go but I allow myself to focus on the sensations”

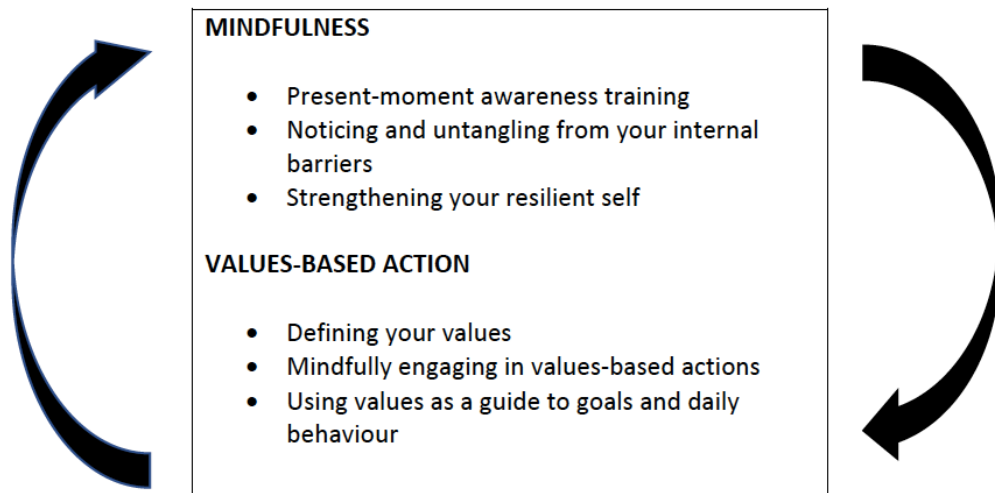
### **Reviewing of Home Practices**

In session two, participant’s home practices were reviewed. The researcher was able to determine whether participant had applied the skills he had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries and reinforce concepts of values and values-based actions.

### **Home Practice 1 – Values Based Actions**

Using the Two Skills Diagram, reiterated to the participant the relationship between mindfulness and values based actions. Checked with the participant which values based action he had performed, what he had noticed before, during and after he had performed the actions. He was also asked to share what values based actions he did not perform. The participant was also asked to share internal and external barriers that prevented him to perform the values based actions.

## TWO SKILLS DIAGRAM



“Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values based actions.”

“Please share with me what was the values based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?”

“Were there any values based actions that you did not perform?”

“What was the internal and external barriers that have prevented you from performing the values based actions?”

The participant shared his experience

- Internal barriers – Thinking about the external barrier
- He was only able to do 3 of the values-based action on Day 1,2,3, and Day 6. Felt that he has done roughly about the same amount he has already been doing.
- External barriers – Activity was cancelled that resulted in him not able to do the values-based action he wanted – Hiking was scheduled but due to the weather was not able to do so – not able to get physical.

### Home Practice 2 – Mindfulness Exercise

Participant was asked about his experience with regards to the mindfulness exercise, how much time he spent each day for the mindfulness exercise, his observations and comments.

*“Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercise”*

*“How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?”*

*“What was your observations?”*

- Participant shared that he completed the week's mindfulness exercise. He used daily chores such as making breakfast, brushing teeth, taking shower, reading and breathing
  - o When preparing breakfast, found it to be difficult to 'focus on practice' as he used to do it automatically.
  - o When brushing teeth, he found it to be good as it 'keeps his mind focused'
  - o When taking shower, he found that it was overall 'positive/fresh/happier feeling. Enjoy this activity more,' relaxed/distressed", "more aware of what's going on", "enjoy the moment"
- Internal barriers included, "Dilemma about going for an exercise class and a farewell party"
- External barriers included, "Not able to go to the exercise class because of the farewell party"
- The mindfulness exercise allows him to relax and more time to focus on tasks
- Shared with participant other ways of being mindful such as brisk walk, hiking, mindful eating.

### **Exercise 1 - Monsters (Passengers) in the Bus**

The purpose of this exercise was to teach the participant about psychological acceptance. The participant was shown a picture with monsters (passengers) in the bus. The participant was told that he was the driver of the Bus of Life and the monsters (passengers) on the bus represented his thoughts, feelings, moods and urges. The participant was told that as the driver, his chosen direction was to go towards his chosen values and the passengers was there to distract him from going towards his values. Participant was asked what he would do in such a situation.

*"This is a picture we call monsters in the bus. You are the driver of this Bus of Life and the monsters represent your thoughts, feelings, moods and urges. As the driver, you have a chosen direction to go towards your values, but the monsters are here to distract you from going towards your values. What would you do in this situation?"*

Participant said that, 'I will not let them affect me, I just need to reframe them'

### **Debrief**

Explained to the participant that trying to get rid of the passengers would be futile. The passengers would always try to distract and influence his actions. Therefore, the participant would have to be aware of the presence of the passengers but continue to proceed to move towards his values.

### **Exercise 2 - Defusion Technique**

The purpose of this skill (defusion technique) was to help participant become aware of the unhelpful thoughts, emotions and moods He would experience and not to be entangled by them. The researcher highlighted the reasons for untangling oneself from thoughts, emotions and moods. The researcher explained to the participant: 1) how internal barriers (thoughts, emotions and moods) could cripple his well-being, 2) how the mind in the course of trying to protect them would end up being unhelpful as it would start to judge them, and 3) how when he was too caught up with his mind's output would missed experiencing the present (this was to enforce mindfulness). The participant was



then asked to write down unhelpful thoughts on Handout 4 (see Appendix 42), that have prevented him from pursuing his values based actions or goals.

*“Often we get caught up with our thoughts, emotions and moods and when we spend too much time on them, we tend to lose out on the experience of the present”*

*“Our mind will constantly be trying to help us in making us ruminate but that can be unhelpful as the mind will then start to judge us”*

*“Please use the handout 4 and write down some of the unhelpful thought that have prevented you from pursuing your values based actions or goals”*

### Debrief

Once the participant has identified the unhelpful thoughts, the researchers reiterated the point that the purpose was to be aware of those unhelpful thoughts, emotions and moods but not to attempt to get rid of them.

### **Exercise 3 – Cartoon Voice Technique**

The purpose of using this technique was to create awareness about negative thoughts, emotions and moods as just what he was as a bit of a language (p 60, Harris, 2008) and not to take them too seriously. Using a cartoon voice and repeating the negative thoughts, emotions and moods, participant would be able to hear them in a different voice and they would lose their impact.

The participant was asked to take one of the unhelpful thoughts that he had labelled in the earlier exercise and focus on the impact of the that unhelpful thought. He was then asked to choose a cartoon voice. The participant was then asked to hear the unhelpful thought through the voice of the cartoon voice he has chosen. The participant was then asked to look at the unhelpful thoughts and notice any impact. Once the participant has shared his experience, the researcher reiterated the importance of being aware of the negative thought and that it was merely language.

*“From the negative thoughts you have identified earlier, focus on one of them and its impact.”*

*“Next please choose a cartoon character you like and hear that negative thought through the voice of the cartoon character.”*

*“Focus on the negative thoughts and notice any impact.”*

*“The purpose of this technique is to help you to recognise and be aware of negative thoughts and He are merely words, not to be take them too seriously.”*

### Debrief

Participant was taught how to use a cartoon voice to repeat the unhelpful thoughts he has. The purpose of using the cartoon voice was to let the participant realised that the unhelpful thoughts, emotions or moods was just part of a language and by repeating the unhelpful thoughts, emotions and moods in a cartoon voice, they would lose their impact.

The participant chose Bart Simpson. He shared that using the cartoon voice actually helped to minimise the unhelpful thought and reinforced the unhelpful thoughts. Acknowledged his experience and reiterated awareness of the negative thought.

#### Exercise 4 – Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion (Harris 2009)

This exercise was used to demonstrate fusion and defusion and helped participant to be aware and be able to watch his thoughts. The participant was asked to write down an unhelpful thought as big as possible to cover a piece of paper. Once he has done so, he was asked to hold the paper tightly and held it up touching his nose. The participant was asked to look passed the paper (his unhelpful thought) at his surroundings. The participant was asked to describe the experience. He was then asked to move the paper slightly away from his nose and to hold the paper less tightly. The participant was asked to describe any difference between the two perspectives. He should reply that now he could see the unhelpful thought and his surroundings. Next the participant was asked to fully stretch out his arms still holding the paper and hold it till his arms ache. Once he was no longer able to hold up the paper, he was asked to put the paper down on his lap. The participant was then asked about his experience.

“Please think of an unhelpful thought and write it as big as possible to cover the piece of paper.”

“Please hold up the paper and place it touching your nose and then look pass the paper at your surroundings.”

*P: “I cannot see anything”*

“Now move the paper slightly away from your nose and tell me what you see?”

*P: “I can see the unhelpful thought now and also the surrounding”*

“Still holding your paper stretch your arm fully. Once you feel that your arms are aching, put your arms down and place them on your lap”

*P: “I know I can hold the paper for a long time, but afterwards it did feel tiring”.*

*P: “My arms do not hurt but I know that the negative thoughts are still on my lap”*

Once the participant shared his experience, he was debriefed.

#### Debrief

The participant was told that it was important to be aware of the unhelpful thoughts but to be mindful not to spend too much time on these thoughts as this would result in them missing out on things that was happening around them (when he put the paper touching his nose and would not be able to be in the moment). He would begin to see his surroundings and notice his thoughts when he put the paper slightly away from his nose (this was to create a healthy psychological distance from the unhealthy thoughts). He would learn to accept and be aware of the unhelpful thoughts but not actively trying to fight them when He put the paper down on his laps. This move was meant to allow the participant

to experience unhelpful thoughts and be present at the moment, that is to be defusing from his unhelpful thoughts. (Hayes et al, 1999; Harris, 2009)

#### Exercise 5 - Physicalizing Exercise

The purpose of teaching the participant this physicalizing exercise was to cultivate emotional acceptance skills. Similar to the defusion exercise before, this exercise was meant to help the participant to create a psychological distance between themselves and his emotions, moods and thoughts. The exercise sought to encourage the participant to open up about an uncomfortable emotion and notice the impact of the emotion as physical sensations that was experienced throughout his body. The participant was asked to objectify the feeling/sensation he experienced as an object out of his body. He was then asked to welcome the objectified feeling back to his body, as a form of acceptance of that feeling.

“Please close your eyes and notice your body sensations and feeling as you breathe in and out. To focus on the sensations in your toes, hands tummy and the whole body. When your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back and notice the sensations.”

“Now I would like you to think of a stressful event, situation or a person and think on it for a few minutes. While you are doing this, be aware of any changes taking place in your body, for example feelings or physical reaction”

“Identify where the feeling or physical reaction and then draw an imaginary line across the feeling. Be curious about this feeling as if it the first time you are encountering them.”

“Please imaging the feeling as a physical object and it has now popped out of your body.”

“The feeling is now outside your body, look at the feeling and now give it a shape. Next give it a colour. Then give it a weight.”

“Now take a step back and look at this object.”

“Next welcome the object now back to your body. Notice where the object has settled and draw an imaginary line.”

“Carry on focusing on your breathing. Turn your awareness now to your tummy and then the whole body. Taking your last breath in and out, when you are ready return to the room and open your eyes.”

#### Debrief

The participant was asked to share his experience in this physicalizing exercise. The participant was asked what the feeling was and the form it took as an object, its shape and weight. To reiterate that it was important to be able to notice feeling or emotion for what it actually was and where it can reside in the body. The purpose of objectifying the feeling or emotion and popping it out of the body was intended to create a healthy psychological distance between the person and his/her feeling and emotions. To reinforce psychological distance, the researcher did a quick hand as emotions exercise. Together with the participant, the researcher used his hands as emotions and covered his eyes. This was to indicate that as a person was embroiled in his or her feelings/emotions, he or she would find it difficult to look

beyond them. But by moving the hands slightly away, this created a psychological distance that in turn provided a mindful perspective of the feelings/emotions.

Participant shared his experience. He showed where the sensation was on his tummy and was appreciative of the exercise, taking perspective of the sensation and creating a distance.

### **Home Practices 1, 2 and 3 (Handout 6 – Appendix 43)**

For Home Practice 1, the participant was asked to engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that he would be performing over the following week. He was encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies. He was encouraged to notice what happened when he performed the chosen actions. He was required to write down any thoughts and feelings that would show up before, during and after he has performed each action. He was also asked to take notice of how others responded and any consequences of his actions.

*“For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice.”*

*“Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions.”*

*“Do take notice of how others respond to your actions and also whether there are any consequences to your actions.”*

For Home Practice 2, the participant was asked to achieve four values-based goals before Session 3. He was asked to focus on his short term goals.

*“For home practice 2, please look at the four short term goals you have recorded ins session 2. Please achieve these goals. Stay present and notice what happens as you pursue these goals.”*

For Home Practice 3, the participant was asked to take about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. He was asked to record any observations and comments.

*“For home practice 3, please spend about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. You can use the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise for this practice. You will be given 4 copies to record your practice.”*

The participant was also given Handout 6 (See Appendix 43). This handout was meant to help participant, if he preferred, to visualize his behavioural process. The squiggly line diagonally up the centre of the page signified that to achieve a values-based direction, the process to be followed would be filled with twists and turns. The rectangular boxes were used for values-based actions and the empty scrolls represented the values-based goals the participants would like to achieve.

Once the instructions for the home practices had been explained, the second session ended with the participant and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session. The next session was scheduled to take place one month later.

### **Session 3 - 8 Aug 2017 at 7pm (1hour 30 mins) (1 July 2017) at the house of the participant (after 4 weeks)**

In session three, participant's home practices for the whole month were reviewed. The researcher reviewed the mindfulness exercises and values-based actions. In doing so, the researcher was able to see whether participant had used the skills he had learned and had progressed in his values-based actions. Similarly, queries were clarified, and concepts were reinforced.

In this session, participant was asked to answer only the WAAQ questionnaire. This was in order to determine whether participant's psychological flexibility scores had changed after the training sessions. In addition, the researcher conducted a short interview to understand how the participant viewed the whole skills training process. To encourage him to carry on practising the new acquired skills, the participant was presented with home practices for further practice (Handouts 7 and 8 – see Appendices 44 and 45). To start this session, the participant was led to do a shorter version of the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes). This was to create awareness and mindfulness

How was your practice?

#### **Debrief**

- Based on the sharing from the participant.
- A good advice to share – use something to remind himself
- Asked participant to work Handout 7 (Values consistency exercise)

#### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes)**

In this exercise, the participants were asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.”*

The participant was asked to close their eyes. He was asked to breathe in through their nose and exhale out from his mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth.”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations in his toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). He was then asked to move his attention to any sensations or temperature change in his hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations in your toes and feet.” (1 minute)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change in your hands and fingers.” (1 minute)*

The participant was asked to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. The participant was asked to come back to the sensations when he had drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations.” (1 minute)*

Next the participant was asked to put his focus on his abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the abdomen with each breath he took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your abdomen.” (1 minute)*

The participant was then asked to focus on his whole body and to feel the sensations throughout his body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body.” (1 minute)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open his eyes and come back to the room in his own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room.”*

*“Share with me your experience.”*

After the participant had shared his experience, a debrief was done.

### Debrief

When the participant had completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what he noticed during the exercise. Once he had shared their experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. It was reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

P – shared about his colleague who has lost his pen and he was vocal and blamed others. Thoughts that are negative. but we should not let it come to our heads.

Reinforce – about negative thoughts and how we label them ... talk about the physicalizing exercise.

P – shared that he also allows himself to be succumbed by negative thoughts and mentioned that he connects other things together – “just our mind”

Asked participant about his thoughts when he observed the bully

- Ex-boss (5-10 years) ago
- Direct boss made life difficult to his ex-boss (mobbing)
- as an observer – “feel bullies are not confident.”

Participant was then asked to fill the WAAQ again. Then to present on Handout 8

Asked participant how has the processes has helped him with regards to negative thoughts/emotions?

CH – “I feel already different from the beginning, strengthened psychological muscles”

### **Review of Home Practices**

The purpose of reviewing the home practice was to enable the researcher to determine whether the participant had applied the skills he had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries pertaining to the home practices, skills learned and reinforce the concepts of values and values-based actions.

### **Home Practice 1 – Values Based Actions**

Using the Two Skills Diagram (see Appendix 34), the relationship between mindfulness and values-based actions was reiterated to the participant. The researcher checked with the participant which values-based actions he had performed, what he had noticed before, during and after he had performed the actions. He was asked to share what values-based actions he has not performed. The participant was also asked to share internal and external barriers that prevented him from performing his values-based actions.

*“Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values based actions.”*

*“Please share with me what were values-based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?”*

*“Were there any value- based actions that you did not perform?”*

*“What were the internal and external barriers that prevented you from performing the values-based actions?”*

P - “Interesting...First of all after our last meeting, I was not happy with the values, it took me a long time to go through...”

Individual was not happy with the values he has chosen previously as they are things that he has already done.

P - “So no point, not enough to do”. “What do I do then? I completely change...”

### **New values chosen**

P- Relationships – “communication, communicating, active listening (e.g. partner is telling you, one ear is there... should focus”. “So, you also get more out of...common problem sometimes”

P - Values based action – asking more questions, sharing also in the office (with colleagues)

P - Personal Growth – Learning (more for myself)

P - Values based action – “to read non-financial stuff, search for courses on the topic about nutrition/nutritionists”

P - “To be mindful – the exercises”

P - “Kept it in mind but not able to do the week – busy the whole day and when you come home, time is just rushing too fast.”

- “Jack Ma’s book I started to read and also regarding relationships I try to improve that”

P - Auto pilot – “to focus (but not easy... you do think about how it goes, so use this time to think about something else, that is very interesting”

“But of course, I also did my yoga that actually goes very well.”

“I also did my detox for 10 days.... I must say it also has a positive effect on how you relax, and you get more peaceful because for 10 days you cannot really go out and have drinks and dinner, so you are more focussed on yourself, that was a wonderful time actually, that was really good.”

“I noticed that after now I do yoga, is different than before because.... Before when I do yoga... I feel uncomfortable but now after the detox is smoother and it is quite interesting. Funny.”

After the participant had completed his sharing and the Home Practice 1 had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to review the Home Practice 2.

### **Home Practice 2 – Four Value-Based Goals**

Participant was asked whether he had achieved performing the four value-based goals. He was asked to share what he had noticed when he pursued the goals.

*“I would like to check whether you did achieve the four values-based goals?”*

*“What did you notice when you were pursuing the goals?”*

P – “I have completed two”

Asked participant whether he encountered any difficulties doing the values-based action

P – “No it is not difficult, just be reminded”

How do you remind yourself?

P – I did not have any stickers. just by own self?

How did you tell yourself to focus on those tasks?

P – Well the ones I have did it before, it was easy.... automatically.

Did the values-based action impact you or others around you?

P – people reacted positively.

Were there any barriers (internal and external) preventing you?

P - No easier in the beginning

Asked about mindfulness exercise



P – not easy .... everything I do.

Did your mind ask you not to do?

P – no

More external rather than internal barriers

Do you think in your mind values are a good guide for the small actions you are doing?

P – difficult question

- Some parts of your life... how you go through your day... the work you do. External driven

Are values good guide for your actions

P – yes. can be

If you remove the values, would you put down actions?

P – Yes

Do you think values play a vital role in your actions?

It seems that you agree – P – umm

Any clarifications?

P – What should I say? Uhm... Difficult to explain. Some parts are easy, and some parts are difficult.

Which part are the easy ones?

P – If I understand it correctly ... one side is the values and the other side is the mindfulness... mindfulness that is more the easier part...the values part is somehow to see the connection between these two.

After the participant had completed his sharing and the Home Practice 2 had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to review the Home Practice 3.

### **Home Practice 3 – Mindfulness Exercise**

Participant was asked about his experience with regards to the mindfulness exercises, how much time he had spent each day for the mindfulness exercise, their observations, and comments.

*“Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercises.”*

*“How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?”*

*“What were your observations?”*

Fulfil the mindfulness exercise by doing yoga and also detox. Asked participant about how he will deal with auto pilot (focussing on daily things)

Asked him also apart from yoga and detox what else has he done for the mindfulness exercise.

P – “What I did was during the day. now is a good moment to do that, just focus on the task (spontaneous) and not planned. Always positive. put more dedication on the work you do... you are more in the moment, all the things you are worried about go more in the background because you are in the moment... that is what I could notice, the benefits of it.”

When the participant had finished sharing and the Home Practice 3 had been reviewed. The researcher proceeded to the next stage of the session – **Values Consistency Exercise**.

#### **Values Consistency Exercise – Handout 7 (see Appendix 44)**

After reviewing the home practices, the participant was asked to fill in Handout 7. The purpose of doing this was to see whether how value consistent the participant had been for the past 1 month.

After he had completed filling up Handout 7, the researcher went through the information with the participant. The researcher asked the participant about the areas which were not consistent with his values, and their reasons for that. This allowed the researcher to reinforce the concepts and skills learned in previous sessions.

*“Thank you for filling up Handout 7, let us go through the handout.”*

*“There were some areas you have marked not consistent with your values. Could you share with me why this is so?”*

After the participant had completed Handout 7, the researcher proceeded to administer the WAAQ.

#### **WAAQ (see pages 8 and 9 of Appendix 29)**

As stated, the purpose of asking the participants to fill this questionnaire was to see whether his psychological flexibility had changed after the skills learning sessions and home practices. The participant was asked to answer the 7 questions in the questionnaire – WAAQ.

*“I would like to ask you 7 statements and please answer them as truthfully as you can.”*

*“Statement 1 – I am able to work effectively in spite of any personal worries that I have. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 2 – I can admit to my mistakes at work and still be successful.*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 3 – I can still work very effectively even if I am nervous about something.*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 4 – Worries do not get in the way of my success. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 5 – I can perform as required no matter how I feel. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 6 – I can work effectively even when I doubt myself. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 7 – My thoughts and feelings do not get in the way of my work. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

After the participant had completed the 7 statements, he was asked how the processes had helped them with regards to negative thoughts and emotions.

*“Please share with me how the processes have helped you with regards to negative thoughts and emotions.”*

Participant shared another example that he has witnessed bullying in the workplace

CH – *“I can tell you now another example that happened recently quite close to me, I have an assistant who use to work for me. I have a new colleague and we shared the assistant. Only when my assistant left than I knew what happened... actually this colleague was troublesome, and nobody wants to work for her as an assistant and she has already changed several times.”*

*“In Zurich we also have a person, his assistant keeps changing frequently because of his behaviour. He talks badly to his assistant or when there is a mistake, “you are useless” “why do you....”. He keeps going on doing that... but these people are still around. He is actually causing trouble for the company....”*

*“I saw it with my assistant that she is suddenly sicker, she is coughing all the time.... Then when she told me about the other colleague, everything was clear for me...”*

Once the participants had shared his experiences, the researcher did a research debrief.

## **Research Debrief**

The research debrief was intended to let the participants know the purpose of the skills training sessions and how the skills could help helping those who had been exposed to workplace bullying.

The researcher explained the strategies used by victims of workplace bullying and how they could only be useful to a certain extent. For example, when victims were not able to seek redress, they could resort to counterproductive behaviours such as retaliation or being absent from work. If the strategies used were unsuccessful, victims might choose to leave. However, while leaving can help victims to stop bullying, victims continue to carry with them the emotional baggage of that experience, which can affect their psychological well-being. This could include rumination of the bullying experience and self-blame. In the workplace bullying literature, to date, there is no research focusing on how individuals can help themselves when they are being bullied (self-intervention).

The skills training sessions formed part of the self-intervention. The skills learned from the sessions cover the six core processes of the therapy Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. A brief explanation of the six processes were

explained to the participant. The researcher then linked the skills learned to the bullying experiences the participant had gone through. This was done to allow the participant to see how the skills could be used to help him in managing the negative thoughts and emotions he might have felt or continued to be feeling due to his exposure to bullying.

*“Thank you for participating in all the sessions. I would like to take this opportunity to explain to you the purpose of my research.”*

*“As you know, workplace bullying is unavoidable and often people will use various ways to counteract it. These could be direct or indirect ways. For example, an individual can choose to resort to behaving counterproductively, such as by retaliation or by being absent from work. However, when these strategies do not work, an individual may choose to leave the organisation. Although these strategies do provide a resolution for an individual, he or she would leave the organization carrying the baggage of the bullying experience and this can often impact on their psychological well-being. That is, the individual could spend time ruminating about their bullying experience and blame himself or herself for what had happened.”*

*“Workplace bullying research to date has not address what bullied individuals could do to help themselves (self-intervention).”*

*“That is why the main focus of this research is to find a way to help bullied individuals.”*

*“The skills training sessions are part of the six processes of the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. The six processes are: acceptance, cognitive defusion, self as context, present, values and committed actions. The six processes enable an individual to become psychologically flexible, that is not to get stuck in negative thoughts, emotions, or moods, but instead to look at what matters to him or her (values) and to spend time working towards that.”*

*“The mindfulness exercise allows us to be aware of our surroundings, how we can be affected physically and physiologically when we are caught up with negative thoughts, emotions, and moods.” (Self-Awareness)*

*“Monsters in the Bus, Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Defusion/Fusion Exercise and Physicalizing Exercise help an individual to accept and defuse negative thoughts, emotions, and moods. In using these, an individual will learn to create a psychological distance between himself and herself and the negative thoughts, emotions and moods. (self-as-context, a form of perspective taking)*

*“Home practices of stating values and values-based actions encourage individuals to use the skills of acceptance, defusion and perspective taking to work towards their values-based goals.”*

*“When applying these skills in the context of workplace bullying, an individual will learn not to let the bullying experience deter him or her from working towards his or her important values. So instead of trying hard to fight the bullying or the emotions, the individual will focus on what are the best ways to counteract the bullying (values- based action) and not let negative thoughts, emotions and moods derail him or her from the values.”*

Once the research debriefs had been completed, the researcher encouraged the participant to continue the home practices. The participant was given Handout 8 (see Appendix 45). The participant was told to follow the previous instructions that were given for the home practices if he decided to carry on.

*“Thank you once again for participating in this research. I would like to give you Handout 8. Although your participation in this research has ended, I would encourage you to carry on doing the home practices that are contained in Handout 8. You can use the previous instructions to help you continue your home practices.”*

To conclude the session, the participant was thanked again for his participation. He was assured that all data collected would only be used for this research and would be anonymised. He was told that should he decide not to have his data used for this research, he would need to contact the researcher.

## **PARTICIPANT 3 - RL FOR ACT INTERVENTION**

### **Session 1 – 29 Jul 1:30pm (1 hour 30 mins) at Pacific Coffee Kowloon Bay near office of the participant.**

- Participant was identified to have experienced bullying and have seen bullying done to others. She shared that she had a terrible boss from a previous company. She is also suffering from eczema and she recognized that it is stress related. In her present job, she is also very stressed.
  - **Someone withholding information which affects your performance**
  - **Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with work**
  - **Being ordered to do work below your level of competence**
  - **Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks**
  - **Spreading of gossip and rumours about you**
  - **Being ignored, excluded or being “Sent to Coventry”**
  - **Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life**
  - **Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)**
  - **Intimidating behaviour such as finger pointing, invasions of personal space, showing, blocking/barring the way**
  - **Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job**
  - **Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes**
  - **Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach**
  - **Persistent criticism of your work and effort**
  - **Having your opinions and views ignored**
  - **Practical joke carried out by people you don’t get on with**
  - **Being given task with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines**
  - **Having allegations made against you**
  - **Excessive monitoring of your work**
  - **Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm**
  - **Being exposed to an unmanageable workload**
- In this session, the participant was told about the 3 separate sessions (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in consecutive weeks and 3<sup>rd</sup> session to be done in a months’ time)
- Participant was informed that the sessions are to expose her to the psychological and behavioural skills training
- Also mentioned to her the importance of practicing the skills in between the sessions as they are part of the training
- Showed her the two skills diagram and emphasised the relationship between mindfulness and also values based action

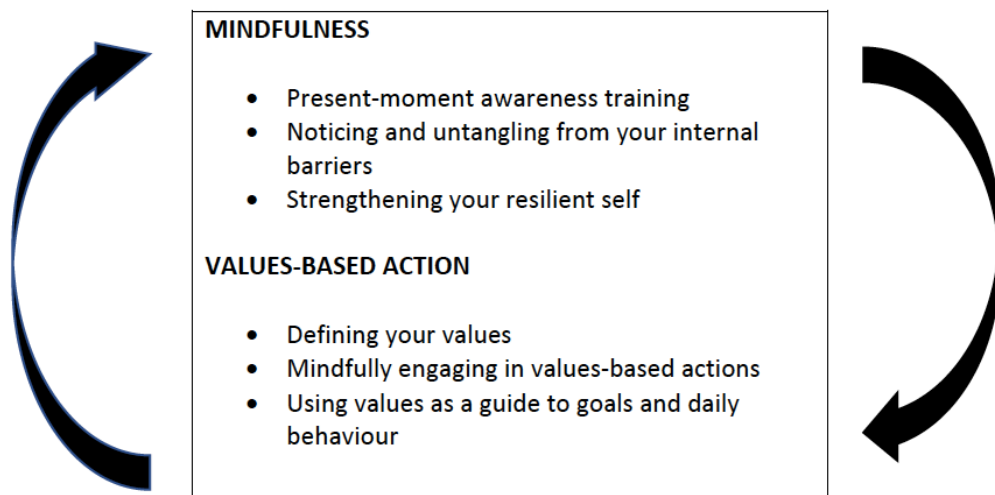
### **The Components of the Skills Training**

Participant was briefed on the components of the skills training. With the use of a Two Skills diagram (see Appendix 34), he was briefed about the relationship between mindfulness skills training and values-based actions.

The participant was told that both mindfulness and values based action worked together. She was told that in the three sessions, she would learn mindfulness exercises and would be putting them in practice as part of her home assignments. She was also told that after each session, she would be given home assignments to be completed before the next session.

To create awareness, mindfulness exercises such as the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise or the Raisin Exercise can be used. For this research, the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise.

## TWO SKILLS DIAGRAM



### Exercise 1

#### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 mins)**

In this exercise, the participant was asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture”*

The participant was asked to close her eyes. She was asked to breathe in through her nose and exhale out from her mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations on her toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). She was then asked to move her attention to any sensations or temperature change on her hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations on your toes and feet” (2 mins)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change on your hands and fingers” (2 mins)*

Encouraged participant to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. Encouraged participant to come back to the sensations when she has drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations” (2 mins)*

Next the participant was asked to put her focus on her abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the tummy with each breathe she took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your tummy” (2 mins)*

The participant was then asked to focus on her whole body and to feel the sensations throughout her body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body” (2 mins)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open her eyes and come back to the room at her own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room”*

### Debrief

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what she noticed during the exercise. Once she has shared her experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. Reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

- In the debrief, the participant shared about her experience.
  - o ‘I had experience in this kind of exercise previously but this is easier to focus as the exercise was shorter’
  - o ‘When I was asked to focus on any part of my body, I focussed on my back and felt the pain and connected with how tired I was’

### **Values and Values-Driven Actions**

In this part, participant learned about what values was and how the values were important in helping her guide her daily behaviours.

The participant was asked what values meant to her.

*“What do values mean to you?”*

- o She was not very sure but stated about her understanding as to ‘What is the value of my existence?’
- Helped her to explore more about what value is and explained that in this context, it meant what/who is important to her. She understood and mentioned that relationships with others (family and friends) are important.

Asked Participant what goals are

- o She stated, “I am not very sure.”
- o Explained to her that goals are time based and achievable by actions

Asked participant what she considered as internal and external barriers

- o She asked for clarifications.
- o Explained to her what both internal and external barriers are



All participants tend to mix up goals and values. Reiterated to participant that goals were achievable and have a completion date whereas values guide his daily behaviours. Participant was also asked what she would considered as internal or external barriers to prevent them from achieving her goals and values.

*“What would you considered as internal and external barriers that would prevent you from achieving your goals and values?”*

- She then replied, “when my mind telling me that I am too tired and too busy at work.”
- Reiterated the points shared by the participant and told her
  - Values are guides to our daily behaviours and goals are indeed time stamped. Both types of barriers will prevent us from working towards the values.

### Compass Metaphor – Goals and Values

To reiterate the difference between goals and values, the Compass Metaphor (Hayes et al, 1999, See Appendix 36) was used. The participant was asked to choose a direction from the Compass (that was to signify the Values). Once participant have chosen the direction for her Values, she was asked to identify landmarks (Short Term goals) along the road to her chosen direction. The participant was then asked to identify the next destination (Long Term goals). The participant was then asked what immediate steps she would take to walk towards her chosen directions.

*“Look at the compass and choose a direction, that would signify your values”*

*Participant – “I chose North”*

*“Next please identify any landmarks along the road to your chosen direction, this will be your short term goals”*

*Participant – “The park”*

*“Please identify the next destination along the road to your chosen direction, this will be your long term goals”*

*Participant – “The exit from the park”*

*“What immediate steps would you take to walk towards your chosen directions, this would be your values based actions”*

*Participant – “Walking across the road to the park”*

### Debrief

Participant was told that values based actions allow them to be aware of her values, her sense of purpose, life direction and meaning. Values based actions enforced values as powerful guide to life goals and actions. Participant was told that these actions would help to enforce values as inner compass to help her to navigate through challenging times and would guide them to make important decisions. It was reiterated to the participant that actions which was guided by her values was unlikely to be influenced by unhelpful thoughts, feelings, moods, and behavioural habits.

## Value Cards

Participant was then presented with the values cards (See Appendix 35). Participant was instructed to choose from the values cards and classified them as many values that she wanted and grouped them into 3 categories: least important, moderately important and most important. From the most important category, she was to choose 5 top values.

*“Please look at these values cards, they are categorised as follow: caring for myself, connecting with others, challenging myself, valuing in the presence of difficulty. In each of the category there are 8 different values. You can choose as many values as you want from any of the categories”*

*“Once you have chosen the values, please put them into the following 3 categories: least important, moderately important and most important”*

*“When you have categorised the values accordingly, please choose 5 top values from the most important category”*

The participant was then presented with Handout 1 (See Appendix 37). Participant was presented with 5 Values (Life) Areas: Your Health Values, Your Relationship Values, Your Work and Career Values, Your Leisure Time Values, and Your Personal Growth Values. Participant was told to choose 1 Value Area from the 5. She was then asked to choose which of the 5 important values she has chosen from the values card and write them under her chosen Value Area. She was then asked to write a value statement and about 3 to 5 value reminder words for her chosen value (see Handout 1). After that she was asked to fill in Handout 2 (See Appendix 38) where she was required to indicate which Values (Life) Areas she has chosen, the value reminder words, the short term, medium and long term goals, values based actions. She was also required to write down any internal barriers that might prevent them from fulfilling her values goals and actions. She was instructed to do home practices (a mindfulness exercise and values-based actions) between session one and session two in Handout 3 (see Appendix 39). The one week gap between sessions one and two allowed participant to practise the mindfulness exercise and values-based actions (p44, Flaxman, Bond & Liveheim, 2013).

### Handout 1

*“Please choose which Value Area you would like to work on for the coming week”*

*“Decide which of your top 5 value that you would like to work on for the coming week”*

*“Based on the value you have chosen for the Value Area, please write down a value statement and about 3 to 5 reminder words for that chosen value”*

### Handout 2

*“Under the Value column, please indicate the Value Area and the Value you would be working on for the coming week”*

*“Please also write down the reminder words for the chosen value”*

*“Under the Goals column, please write down the short term goals, medium term goals and long term goals”*

*“Under the Actions column, please write 3 value based actions that you would be working on for the coming week”*

Before briefing the Home Practices, the participant was reminded about the Two Skills Diagram (Appendix 34). The participant was also introduced to a Two Sheets of Paper Technique (see Appendix 40). One of sheets have the word “VALUE” and the other with “UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS”. The purpose of showing the two papers to the participant was to reiterate that the training that she has gone through was to help her work towards her VALUES despite the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS. The point was to accept the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS in the background and work towards her values.

*“You will see before you two sheets of paper. One with the word VALUES and the other with the words UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS. The purpose of the training you have gone through was to help you work towards your VALUES (the VALUES sheet of paper was moved slightly to the front while the other sheet of paper was moved slightly behind) and to accept the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS in the background”*

After the participant was presented with the Two Sheets of Paper Techniques, she was briefed on the Home Practices 1 and 2.

### **Home Practices 1 and 2**

For Home Practice 1, the participant was asked to engage mindfully on the three valued actions that she would be performing over the following week. She was encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies. She was encouraged to notice what happened when she performed the chosen actions. She was required to write down any thoughts, feelings that would show up before, during and after she has performed each action. She was also asked to take notice of how others would respond and any consequences of her actions.

*“For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three valued based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice”*

*“Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions”*

*“Do take notice of how others responded to your actions and also was there any consequences to your actions”*

For Home Practice 2, the participant was asked to take about 10 minutes to practice mindfulness breathing exercise. He was asked to record any observations and comments.

*“For home practice 2, please spend about 10 minutes to practice mindfulness breathing exercise. You can use the Brief Body and Breathe Awareness Exercise for this practice”*

Once the instructions for the home practices was explained, the first session ended with the participant and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session.

**Session 2 – 5 August 2017, 10:30am (1 hour 30 mins) at Naked Hub, Bonham Strand, Hong Kong.**

In this session, the researcher would review the participant's home practices and the participant would continue to learn skills to help her work towards her values. The skills were taught using five exercises: Monsters in the Bus (see Appendix 41), Defusion Technique (see Appendix 42), Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion and Physicalizing exercise, to help the participant learn psychological acceptance and perspective thinking. Before all these, to kick off session 2, the participant was asked to do the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise.

**Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 mins)**

In this exercise, the participant was asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture”*

The participant was asked to close her eyes. She was asked to breathe in through her nose and exhale out from her mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations on her toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). She was then asked to move her attention to any sensations or temperature change on her hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations on your toes and feet” (2 mins)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change on your hands and fingers” (2 mins)*

Encouraged participant to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. Encouraged participant to come back to the sensations when she has drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations” (2 mins)*

Next the participant was asked to put her focus on his abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the tummy with each breathe she took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your tummy” (2 mins)*

The participant was then asked to focus on her whole body and to feel the sensations throughout her body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body” (2 mins)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open his eyes and come back to the room at his own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room”*

*“Share with me your experience.”*

## Debrief

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what she noticed during the exercise. Once she has shared his experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. Reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

After the participant shared about his experience, a debrief was done

- *“My mind was focusing on work. I am very busy at work this period of time. I have to deal with staff cases suddenly like interview. For example, today I am off, but my boss called me to discuss work with me. She has forgotten that I was off today but there is something urgent and want to discuss with her. Just a few minutes. She wanted me to help to put a job ad and I have also expected to work at home as I have brought the laptop back home. But did not expect to do additional work. While I was on my way, my boss spoke to me about the issue and I have then been thinking about it on my way here on the bus. After we have spoken, I have been thinking.”*
- *“Both my sister and cousin make an appointment to have dinner last night. But I was tired last week and this week at work, but I went to dinner anyway. Some argument with my sister still not resolved from previous occasion and plus I am already very tired, so did not feel like trying to make conversation. So, I just listened and also try to avoid her eyes. So, as we left, I feel that my sister was not that happy. But because I am tired and that I have not found a solution to communicate better with her to enable both of us are comfortable. Therefore, I started thinking about the issue. I think I have not dealt with the issue with my sister satisfactorily.”*
- *“I am disappointed that I cannot do anything about the situation with my sister. If I did not think about my work today, I will not be so stressed and start to think about how I feel and also about the situation with my sister.”*
- *“I know that if I feel better, I will be able to deal with the issues.”*

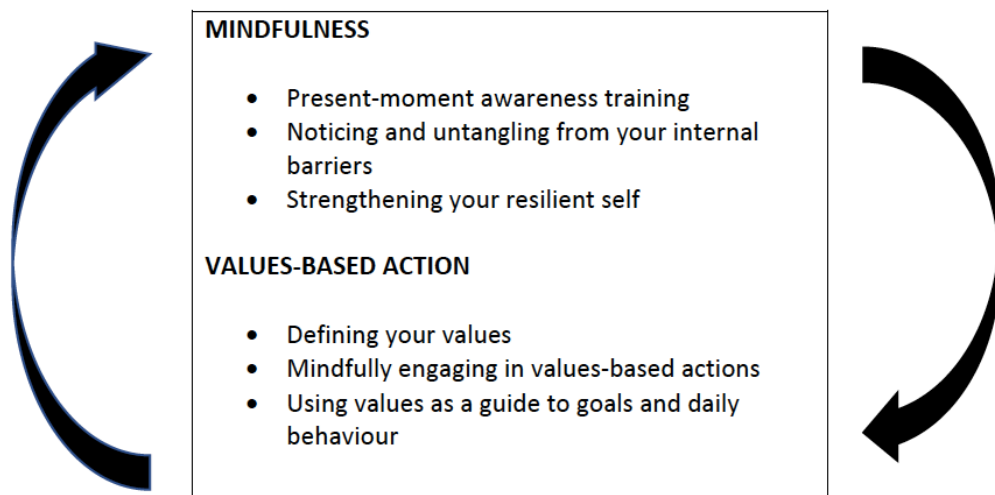
## **Reviewing of Home Practices**

In session two, participant's home practices were reviewed. The researcher was able to determine whether participant had applied the skills she had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries and reinforce concepts of values and values-based actions.

## **Home Practice 1 – Values Based Actions**

Using the Two Skills Diagram, reiterated to the participant the relationship between mindfulness and values based actions. Checked with the participant which values based action she has performed, what she has noticed before, during and after she has performed the actions. She was also asked to share what values based actions she did not perform. The participant was also asked to share internal and external barriers that prevented them to perform the values based actions.

## TWO SKILLS DIAGRAM



“Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values based actions.”

“Please share with me what was the values based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?”

“Were there any values based actions that you did not perform?”

“What was the internal and external barriers that have prevented you from performing the values based actions?”

The participant shared her experience

- Understand another person’s perspectives – “*before performing the value action, I feel emotional, during I feel resistant and after that I feel that the other person’s perspective has good intentions.*”
- Internal barriers – “*If message not positive, no need to focus*”
- External barriers – “*People’s unrealistic facts*”

### Home Practice 2 – Mindfulness Exercise

Participant was asked about her experience with regards to the mindfulness exercise, how much time she spent each day for the mindfulness exercise, her observations and comments.

“*Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercise*”

“*How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?*”

“*What was your observations?*”

- Participant shared that she attempted 3 days of mindfulness exercise (Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise). Use a timer on the phone for 10 mins.
- Environment can affect the practice. Familiar environment can be a distraction. For e.g. she has to tell herself to concentrate on the mindfulness practice.
- Difficult to focus in familiar environment.
- Cannot go to sleep therefore tried the mindfulness exercise

#### Day 1

- Internal barriers included – thinking about work and to tell yourself to focus
- External barriers included – environment (familiar – not able to do so/unfamiliar)
- The mindfulness exercise allows her to not overthink and will tell herself to focus
- Use own method to help herself to be calm at the moment. Tell herself to be calm.
- No urgency to deal with things, will avoid and not be calm. On contrary if something that requires her attention, she will be calm.

#### Day 2

- Internally barriers - It is difficult to focus if something that needs to be done within a restricted time frame, lack of willingness to complete it.
- Externally barriers – environment (familiar)

#### Day 3

- Internally barriers – Distraction, want to complete the tasks
- Externally barriers – Environment (familiar)

### **Exercise 1 - Monsters (Passengers) in the Bus**

The purpose of this exercise was to teach the participant about psychological acceptance. The participant was shown a picture with monsters (passengers) in the bus. The participant was told that she was the driver of the Bus of Life and the monsters (passengers) on the bus represented her thoughts, feelings, moods and urges. The participant was told that as the driver, her chosen direction was to go towards her chosen values and the passengers was there to distract her from going towards her values. Participant was asked what she would do in such a situation.

*“This is a picture we call monsters in the bus. You are the driver of this Bus of Life and the monsters represent your thoughts, feelings, moods and urges. As the driver, you have a chosen direction to go towards your values, but the monsters are here to distract you from going towards your values. What would you do in this situation?”*

Participant said:

- *“As a functional person, what is the shortest /fastest way to deal with an issue? How to utilise my time. This is practical and pragmatic but can be stressful.”*
- *“For me, I will think about consequences. If I throw my passengers, can I bear with the consequences? I am not willing to throw the monsters out of the bus.”*

## Debrief

Explained to the participant that trying to get rid of the passengers would be futile. The passengers would always try to distract and influence her actions. Therefore, the participant would have to be aware of the presence of the passengers but continue to proceed to move towards her values.

## **Exercise 2 - Defusion Technique**

The purpose of this skill (defusion technique) was to help participant become aware of the unhelpful thoughts, emotions and moods she would experience and not to be entangled by them. The researcher highlighted the reasons for untangling oneself from thoughts, emotions and moods. The researcher explained to the participant: 1) how internal barriers (thoughts, emotions and moods) could cripple her well-being, 2) how the mind in the course of trying to protect her would end up being unhelpful as it would start to judge her, and 3) how when she was too caught up with her mind's output would miss experiencing the present (this was to enforce mindfulness). The participant was then asked to write down unhelpful thoughts on Handout 4 (see Appendix 42), that have prevented her from pursuing her values based actions or goals.

*“Often we get caught up with our thoughts, emotions and moods and when we spend too much time on them, we tend to lose out on the experience of the present”*

*“Our mind will constantly be trying to help us in making us ruminate but that can be unhelpful as the mind will then start to judge us”*

*“Please use the handout 4 and write down some of the unhelpful thought that have prevented you from pursuing your values based actions or goals”*

## Debrief

Once the participant has identified the unhelpful thoughts, the researchers reiterated the point that the purpose was to be aware of those unhelpful thoughts, emotions and moods but not to attempt to get rid of them.

## **Exercise 3 – Cartoon Voice Technique**

The purpose of using this technique was to create awareness about negative thoughts, emotions and moods as a bit of a language (p 60, Harris, 2008) and not to take them too seriously. Using a cartoon voice and repeating the negative thoughts, emotions and moods, participant would be able to hear them in a different voice and they would lose their impact.

The participant was asked to take one of the unhelpful thoughts that she had labelled in the earlier exercise and focus on the impact of the that unhelpful thought. She was then asked to choose a cartoon voice. The participant was then asked to hear the unhelpful thought through the voice of the cartoon voice she has chosen. The participant was then asked to look at the unhelpful thoughts and notice any impact. Once the participant has shared her experience, the researcher reiterated the importance of being aware of the negative thought and that it was merely language.

*“From the negative thoughts you have identified earlier, focus on one of them and its impact.”*



*“Next please choose a cartoon character you like and hear that negative thought through the voice of the cartoon character.”*

*“Focus on the negative thoughts and notice any impact.”*

*“The purpose of this technique is to help you to recognise and be aware of negative thoughts and they are merely words, not to be taken too seriously.”*

### Debrief

Participant was taught how to use a cartoon voice to repeat the unhelpful thoughts she had. The purpose of using the cartoon voice was to let the participant realise that the unhelpful thoughts, emotions or moods were just part of a language. By repeating the unhelpful thoughts, emotions and moods in a cartoon voice, they would lose their impact.

The participant chose Minion. She shared that using the cartoon voice made her laugh and felt less stressful.

### **Exercise 4 – Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion (Harris 2009)**

This exercise was used to demonstrate fusion and defusion and helped participant to be aware and be able to watch his thoughts. The participant was asked to write down an unhelpful thought as big as possible to cover a piece of paper. Once he has done so, she was asked to hold the paper tightly and held it up touching her nose. The participant was asked to look passed the paper (his unhelpful thought) at his surroundings. The participant was asked to describe the experience. She was then asked to move the paper slightly away from her nose and to hold the paper less tightly. The participant was asked to describe any difference between the two perspectives. She should reply that now she could see the unhelpful thought and her surroundings. Next the participant was asked to fully stretched out her arms still holding the paper and hold it till her arms ache. Once she was no longer able to hold up the paper, she was asked to put the paper down on her laps. The participant was then asked about her experience.

*“Please think of an unhelpful thought and write it as big as possible to cover the piece of paper.”*

*“Please hold up the paper and place it touching your nose and then look pass the paper at your surroundings.”*

*Participant: “It is difficult, and I cannot see anything”*

*“Now move the paper slightly away from your nose and tell me what you see?”*

*Participant: “I can see the word STRESS clearer, but I am also able to see the surroundings”*

*“Still holding your paper stretch your arm fully. Once you feel that your arms are aching, put your arms down and place them on your lap”*

*Participant: “The issue was expanded when the paper was near”.*

*Participant: “With my hands stretched out, the issue still remains but I can see also the surroundings.”*

Once the participant shared her experience, she was debriefed.

## Debrief

The participant was told that it was important to be aware of the unhelpful thoughts but to be mindful not to spend too much time on these thoughts as this would result in them missing out on things that was happening around them (when she put the paper touching her nose, she would be able to be in the moment). She would begin to see her surroundings and notice her thoughts when she puts the paper slightly away from her nose (this was to create a healthy psychological distance from the unhealthy thoughts). She would learn to accept and be aware of the unhelpful thoughts but not actively trying to fight them when she puts the paper down on her laps. This move was meant to allow the participant to experience unhelpful thoughts and be present at the moment, that is to be defusing from her unhelpful thoughts. (Hayes et al, 1999; Harris, 2009)

## **Exercise 5 - Physicalizing Exercise**

The purpose of teaching the participant this physicalizing exercise was to cultivate emotional acceptance skills. Similar to the defusion exercise before, this exercise was meant to help the participant to create a psychological distance between themselves and his emotions, moods and thoughts. The exercise sought to encourage the participant to open up about an uncomfortable emotion and notice the impact of the emotion as physical sensations that was experienced throughout his body. The participant was asked to objectify the feeling/sensation she experienced as an object out of his body. She was then asked to welcome the objectified feeling back to her body, as a form of acceptance of that feeling.

“Please close your eyes and notice your body sensations and feeling as you breathe in and out. To focus on the sensations in your toes, hands tummy and the whole body. When your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back and notice the sensations.”

“Now I would like you to think of a stressful event, situation or a person and think on it for a few minutes. While you are doing this, be aware of any changes taking place in your body, for example feelings or physical reaction”

“Identify where the feeling or physical reaction and then draw an imaginary line across the feeling. Be curious about this feeling as if it the first time you are encountering them.”

“Please imaging the feeling as a physical object and it has now popped out of your body.”

“The feeling is now outside your body, look at the feeling and now give it a shape. Next give it a colour. Then give it a weight.”

“Now take a step back and look at this object.”

“Next welcome the object now back to your body. Notice where the object has settled and draw an imaginary line.”

“Carry on focusing on your breathing. Turn your awareness now to your tummy and then the whole body. Taking your last breath in and out, when you are ready return to the room and open your eyes.”

### Debrief

The participant was asked to share her experience in this physicalizing exercise. The participant was asked what the feeling was and the form it took as an object, its shape and weight. To reiterate that it was important to be able to notice feeling or emotion for what it actually was and where it can reside in the body. The purpose of objectifying the feeling or emotion and popping it out of the body was intended to create a healthy psychological distance between the person and his/her feeling and emotions. To reinforce psychological distance, the researcher did a quick hand as emotions exercise. Together with the participant, the researcher used his hands as emotions and covered his eyes. This was to indicate that as a person was embroiled in his or her feelings/emotions, he or she would find it difficult to look beyond them. But by moving the hands slightly away, this created a psychological distance that in turn provided a mindful perspective of the feelings/emotions.

Participant shared her experience.

- Her object was a red triangular object. She placed it at the back of her body (the location where she felt most tired). She shared that the use of Cartoon voice was easier. For the physicalizing exercise, she felt that she became lost after placing the object at the back of her body. She preferred to use the cartoon voice technique as she found it amusing that she was able to see all her monsters running around when she closed her eyes. In doing so, she felt that her stress and thoughts became less serious.

Reinforce the psychological distance by getting participant to do the hand as emotions exercise. Together with the participant, I used the hand as emotions and covered my eyes. This is to indicate that when we are embroiled in the emotions, we are not able to look beyond them. By moving the hands slightly away, this creates psychological distance that is providing a mindful perspective of the emotions.

### **Home Practices 1, 2 and 3 (Handout 6 – Appendix 43)**

For Home Practice 1, the participant was asked to engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that he would be performing over the following week. She was encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies. He was encouraged to notice what happened when he performed the chosen actions. She was required to write down any thoughts and feelings that would show up before, during and after she has performed each action. Shee was also asked to take notice of how others responded and any consequences of her actions.

*“For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice.”*

*“Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions.”*

*“Do take notice of how others respond to your actions and also whether there are any consequences to your actions.”*

For Home Practice 2, the participant was asked to achieve four values-based goals before Session 3. She was asked to focus on her short term goals.

*“For home practice 2, please look at the four short term goals you have recorded in Session 2. Please achieve these goals. Stay present and notice what happens as you pursue these goals.”*

For Home Practice 3, the participant was asked to take about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. She was asked to record any observations and comments.

*“For home practice 3, please spend about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. You can use the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise for this practice. You will be given 4 copies to record your practice.”*

The participant was also given Handout 6 (See Appendix 43). This handout was meant to help participant, if she preferred, to visualize her behavioural process. The squiggly line diagonally up the centre of the page signified that to achieve a values-based direction, the process to be followed would be filled with twists and turns. The rectangular boxes were used for values-based actions and the empty scrolls represented the values-based goals the participant would like to achieve.

Once the instructions for the home practices had been explained, the second session ended with the participant and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session. The next session was scheduled to take place one month later.

### **Session 3 – 5 Sept 2017, 6:00pm (1 hour 30 mins) at Naked Hub, Bonham Strand, Hong Kong.**

In session three, participant’s home practices for the whole month were reviewed. The researcher reviewed the mindfulness exercises and values-based actions. In doing so, the researcher was able to see whether participants had used the skills she had learned and had progressed in her values-based actions. Similarly, queries were clarified, and concepts were reinforced.

In this session, the participant was asked to answer only the WAAQ questionnaire. This was in order to determine whether participant's psychological flexibility scores had changed after the training sessions. In addition, the researcher conducted a short interview to understand how participants viewed the whole skills training process. To encourage her to carry on practising the new acquired skills, participant was presented with home practices for further practice (Handouts 7 and 8 – see Appendices 44 and 45). To start this session, participant was led to do a shorter version of the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes). This was to create awareness and mindfulness.

How was your practice?

### Debrief

Participant: mentioned about metaphor “monsters in the bus” has a positive impact on her.

*“I realised that the monsters in the bus is ingrained in her mind” but the exercises – “reminder words have helped change my behaviour”*

She mentioned that the past few weeks at work, *“when I needed these skills, in my recollection there were two incidents that I missed applying the method (monsters in the bus – acceptance) to adjust my own emotions and thoughts.”*

*“I feel ashamed that I did not complete the exercises”*

### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes)**

In this exercise, the participants were asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.”*

The participant was asked to close her eyes. She asked to breathe in through their nose and exhale out from her mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth.”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations in her toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). She was then asked to move her attention to any sensations or temperature change in her hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations in your toes and feet.” (1 minute)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change in your hands and fingers.” (1 minute)*

The participant was asked to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. The participant was asked to come back to the sensations when she had drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations.” (1 minute)*

Next the participant was asked to put her focus on her abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the abdomen with each breath she took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your abdomen.” (1 minute)*

The participant was then asked to focus on her whole body and to feel the sensations throughout her body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body.” (1 minute)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open her eyes and come back to the room in her own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room.”*

*“Share with me your experience.”*

After the participant had shared her experience, a debrief was done.

### Debrief

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what she noticed during the exercise. Once she has shared their experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. It was reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

Participant shared about her experience

- *“Short focus within a few minutes is ok”*
- *“I was thinking there was something popped out” – Why I have changed the date to meet today was that I was supposed to go for an interview yesterday, but I did not go.”*
- *“Why I did not go, just last Thurs, I felt burnout and I have been very busy at work. To finish the home practices and work has been stressful”. I was feeling very tired but difficult to describe how tired I am.”*
- *“earlier when I was doing the mindfulness exercise, I was thinking that this meeting with you reminds me to be aware of my body reactions and to adjust own time, that is to do or not to do (the interview).”*
- *“To compare with the past, I will force myself to go for an interview, I would go and try it our first as it is an opportunity but when I think about it my body signals are telling me that I cannot force myself to go because I had a headache the night before and I am not focussed.”*
- *“When I am tired, my focus level is low, and I am not comfortable to go for the interview.”*
- *“It is very rarely I will not go for an interview. But yesterday I went to work anyway and rest when I return back home and not do anything.”*
- *“Earlier at the moment during the mindfulness exercise, if I practice more, I will pay more attention to my body to determine whether I am able to take that kind of pressure. Or do I need to go and experience that kind pressure. It is not that I have no job it is just that I would like to have a good opportunity or a better*

*paid job. But it is not something that needs to be rushed. It is just that I want to but want to go ahead to do. But timing could not be right as I am also doing a course which requires lots of work and together with my daily work, accumulatively it is already tiring. So, if I do have such a big change, in fact, to me it will be pressurising. So, when I relaxed, I will be able to feel the strain and tiredness on my head and shoulders. These are all I can think of."*

Talked to RL about Values

- Reiterating Values to physical symptoms (thoughts) – leads to stress
- Relating what RL shares to one of her value – Health – physical tiredness – headache – leads to stress (avoidance – work hard to ignore the physical tiredness) - towards the value (health) – thus decide to go for interview – although we
- Mindfulness exercise creates awareness for RL.

RL – I feel ashamed that I do not really work on the home practices "I am not good in school and not very motivated to do homework, as for the home practices, unless I have them with me, I tend to forget about them"

Asked participant what is the best way for her to remember things?

Participant– "picture/pictorial"

What kind of picture?

Participant – "the use of monster in the bus is the obvious way to visualize. As when I think about my emotions and thoughts as a monster, I will link it to Minion as a cartoon character and using the voice of minion to deal with the emotions and thoughts"

What will prevent you using the cartoon voice technique

Participant– "my habits", I was thinking about this on the bus and was thinking to myself what my takeaway from all these sessions is. I realized and reviewed that I am not a very smart person in terms of studies, to concentrate on words is difficult because I cannot focus on the words, they seem to be flying around, therefore it is hard for me to articulate well using words to express"

The second thing, this exercise to me, I will think what the real application are... I am a person that is really easily stressed and easily depressed person so how to change my behavior... I think it is very difficult to change one's habit, I think the biggest challenge is for me... When I got used to do something....

## **Review of Home Practices**

The purpose of reviewing the home practice was to enable the researcher to determine whether the participant had applied the skills she had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries pertaining to the home practices, skills learned and reinforce the concepts of values and values-based actions.

## **Home Practice 1 – Values Based Actions**

Using the Two Skills Diagram (see Appendix 34), the relationship between mindfulness and values-based actions was reiterated to the participant. The researcher checked with the participant which values-based actions she had performed, what she had noticed before, during and after she had performed the actions. She was asked to share what values-based actions she has not performed. The participant was also asked to share internal and external barriers that prevented her from performing her values-based actions.

*“Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values based actions.”*

*“Please share with me what were values-based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?”*

*“Were there any value- based actions that you did not perform?”*

*“What were the internal and external barriers that prevented you from performing the values-based actions?”*

After the participant had completed her sharing and the Home Practice 1 had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to review the Home Practice 2.

- Participant shared about how she came out with an idea to save cost for the organization she works for. She wanted to use this opportunity to do one of her values-based action (presenting new idea to others) however, it was not successful because she was not well prepared.
- 
- Acknowledged her manager’s view about her presentation skills. Manager provided advice. Accept her views. However, she mentioned that she did not write all these down on the home practices. (values-based actions and goals). She reiterated about her issue about words being difficult to be focused

So asked participant how she would use pictures/pictorial to help her to work on her values-based actions and goals. She was not able to provide any ideas

### **Home Practice 2 – Four Value-Based Goals**

Participant was asked whether she had achieved performing the four value-based goals. She was asked to share what she had noticed when she pursued the goals.

*“I would like to check whether you did achieve the four values-based goals?”*

*“What did you notice when you were pursuing the goals?”*

Participant – *“I have not completed any”*

Asked participant whether she encountered any difficulties doing the values-based action

Participant – *“Yes not well prepared”*

After the participant had completed her sharing and the Home Practice 2 had been reviewed, the researcher proceeded to review the Home Practice 3.

### **Home Practice 3 – Mindfulness Exercise**

Participant was asked about her experience with regards to the mindfulness exercises, how much time she had spent each day for the mindfulness exercise, their observations, and comments.



*“Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercises.”*

*“How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?”*

*“What were your observations?”*

- Practicing awareness during the journey to work on a bus
- Talking to cat about issues
- Not likely to ruminate about issues unless it is directly affecting her. For those issues that affect her directly – “she will think about the what are the next steps to take to go towards her own values” instead of ruminating about the reasons and causes.

When the participant had finished sharing and the Home Practice 3 had been reviewed. The researcher proceeded to the next stage of the session – **Values Consistency Exercise**.

#### **Values Consistency Exercise – Handout 7 (see Appendix 44)**

After reviewing the home practices, the participant was asked to fill in Handout 7. The purpose of doing this was to see whether how value consistent the participant had been for the past 1 month.

After she had completed filling up Handout 7, the researcher went through the information with the participant. The researcher asked the participant about the areas which were not consistent with hers\ values, and her reasons for that. This allowed the researcher to reinforce the concepts and skills learned in previous sessions.

*“Thank you for filling up Handout 7, let us go through the handout.”*

*“There were some areas you have marked not consistent with your values. Could you share with me why this is so?”*

After the participant had completed Handout 7, the researcher proceeded to administer the WAAQ.

#### **WAAQ (see pages 8 and 9 of Appendix 29)**

As stated, the purpose of asking the participants to fill this questionnaire was to see whether her psychological flexibility had changed after the skills learning sessions and home practices. The participant was asked to answer the 7 questions in the questionnaire – WAAQ.

*“I would like to ask you 7 statements and please answer them as truthfully as you can.”*

*“Statement 1 – I am able to work effectively in spite of any personal worries that I have. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 2 – I can admit to my mistakes at work and still be successful.”*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.*

*“Statement 3 – I can still work very effectively even if I am nervous about something.*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 4 – Worries do not get in the way of my success. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 5 – I can perform as required no matter how I feel. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 6 – I can work effectively even when I doubt myself. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 7 – My thoughts and feelings do not get in the way of my work. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

After the participant had completed the 7 statements, she was asked how the processes had helped her with regards to negative thoughts and emotions.

*“Please share with me how the processes have helped you with regards to negative thoughts and emotions.”*

Participant

- *“Old habits have diminished.”*
- *“I will also blame myself – why this happen? Why did I not look at it differently?”*
- *After hearing what my manager said. I rationalise what she said. Instead of me thinking over and over again about what I have not done?”*
- *“I now am able to change a behaviour, but I know it is still a long process but using tools such as cartoon technique and mindfulness exercises will help.”*
- *“I have never thought that I will be able to change my behaviour as I am a person that get stressed easily followed by having negative thoughts.”*
- *“Now I can see changes for e.g. when I have people who are not nice to me or mean to me, I will not let it affect me... let them be.”*
- *“Things that might affect my future or important people around me, I am likely to change my behaviour, the time I spent on negative thoughts and emotions is reduced.”*
- *“I will look at issues thinking about how I could do better and change from being negative to be positive about the situation.”*

- Internal barriers – *“understand the barriers that affecting me but instead of dwelling.... look at how to eliminate those barriers.”*
- External barriers – *“open to listen to suggestions and if I could reduce or diminish external barriers. towards values that are important to you”*

## **Research Debrief**

The research debrief was intended to let the participant know the purpose of the skills training sessions and how the skills could help helping those who had been exposed to workplace bullying.

The researcher explained the strategies used by victims of workplace bullying and how they could only be useful to a certain extent. For example, when victims were not able to seek redress, they could resort to counterproductive behaviours such as retaliation or being absent from work. If the strategies used were unsuccessful, victims might choose to leave. However, while leaving can help victims to stop bullying, victims continue to carry with them the emotional baggage of that experience, which can affect their psychological well-being. This could include rumination of the bullying experience and self-blame. In the workplace bullying literature, to date, there is no research focusing on how individuals can help themselves when they are being bullied (self-intervention).

The skills training sessions formed part of the self-intervention. The skills learned from the sessions cover the six core processes of the therapy Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. A brief explanation of the six processes were explained to the participants. The researcher then linked the skills learned to the bullying experiences the participant had gone through. This was done to allow the participants to see how the skills could be used to help them in managing the negative thoughts and emotions she might have felt or continued to be feeling due to her exposure to bullying.

*“Thank you for participating in all the sessions. I would like to take this opportunity to explain to you the purpose of my research.”*

*“As you know, workplace bullying is unavoidable and often people will use various ways to counteract it. These could be direct or indirect ways. For example, an individual can choose to resort to behaving counterproductively, such as by retaliation or by being absent from work. However, when these strategies do not work, an individual may choose to leave the organisation. Although these strategies do provide a resolution for an individual, he or she would leave the organization carrying the baggage of the bullying experience and this can often impact on their psychological well-being. That is, the individual could spend time ruminating about their bullying experience and blame himself or herself for what had happened.”*

*“Workplace bullying research to date has not address what bullied individuals could do to help themselves (self-intervention).”*

*“That is why the main focus of this research is to find a way to help bullied individuals.”*

*“The skills training sessions are part of the six processes of the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. The six processes are: acceptance, cognitive defusion, self as context, present, values and committed actions. The six processes enable an individual to become psychologically flexible, that is not to get stuck in negative thoughts, emotions, or moods, but instead to look at what matters to him or her (values) and to spend time working towards that.”*

*“The mindfulness exercise allows us to be aware of our surroundings, how we can be affected physically and physiologically when we are caught up with negative thoughts, emotions, and moods.” (Self-Awareness)*

*“Monsters in the Bus, Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Defusion/Fusion Exercise and Physicalizing Exercise help an individual to accept and defuse negative thoughts, emotions, and moods. In using these, an individual will learn to create a psychological distance between himself and herself and the negative thoughts, emotions and moods. (self-as-context, a form of perspective taking)*

*“Home practices of stating values and values-based actions encourage individuals to use the skills of acceptance, defusion and perspective taking to work towards their values-based goals.”*

*“When applying these skills in the context of workplace bullying, an individual will learn not to let the bullying experience deter him or her from working towards his or her important values. So instead of trying hard to fight the bullying or the emotions, the individual will focus on what are the best ways to counteract the bullying (values- based action) and not let negative thoughts, emotions and moods derail him or her from the values.”*

Once the research debriefs had been completed, the researcher encouraged the participant to continue the home practices. The participant was given Handout 8 (see Appendix 45). The participant was told to follow the previous instructions that were given for the home practices if she decided to carry on.

*“Thank you once again for participating in this research. I would like to give you Handout 8. Although your participation in this research has ended, I would encourage you to carry on doing the home practices that are contained in Handout 8. You can use the previous instructions to help you continue your home practices.”*

To conclude the session, the participant was thanked again for her participation. She was assured that all data collected would only be used for this research and would be anonymised. She was told that should she decide not to have their data used for this research, she would need to contact the researcher.

## **PARTICIPANT 4 - ZZ FOR ACT INTERVENTION**

### **Session 1 – 23 Oct 2017 at 1:30pm (1 hour 30 mins) at JustCo Co-Working Space Singapore**

- Participant was identified to have experienced severe bullying and have seen bullying done to others.
  - **Someone withholding information which affects your performance**
  - **Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with work**
  - **Being ordered to do work below your level of competence**
  - **Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks**
  - **Spreading of gossip and rumours about you**
  - **Being ignored, excluded or being “Sent to Coventry”**
  - **Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life**
  - **Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)**
  - **Intimidating behaviour such as finger pointing, invasions of personal space, showing, blocking/barring the way**
  - **Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job**
  - **Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes**
  - **Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach**
  - **Persistent criticism of your work and effort**
  - **Having your opinions and views ignored**
  - **Practical joke carried out by people you don’t get on with**
  - **Being given task with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines**
  - **Having allegations made against you**
  - **Excessive monitoring of your work**
  - **Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm**
  - **Being exposed to an unmanageable workload**
- In the session, the participant was told about the 3 separate sessions (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in consecutive weeks and 3<sup>rd</sup> session to be done in a months’ time)
- Participant was informed that the sessions are to expose him to the psychological and behavioural skills training
- Also mentioned to him the importance of practicing the skills in between the sessions as they are part of the training
- Showed him the two skills diagram and emphasised the relationship between mindfulness and also values based action

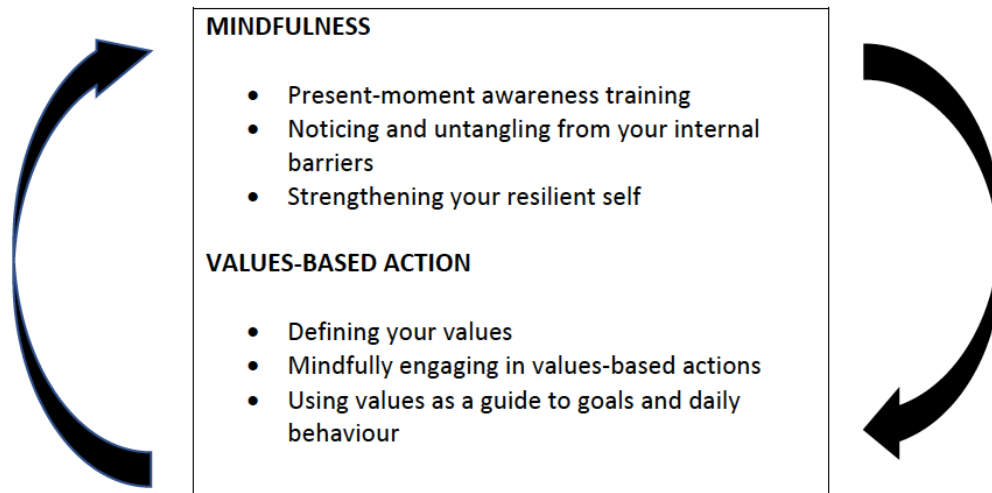
### **The Components of the Skills Training**

Participant was briefed on the components of the skills training. With the use of a Two Skills diagram (see Appendix 34), he was briefed about the relationship between mindfulness skills training and values-based actions.

The participant was told that both mindfulness and values based action worked together. He was told that in the three sessions, he would learn mindfulness exercises and would be putting them in practice as part of his home assignments. He was also told that after each session, he would be given home assignments to be completed before the next session.

To create awareness, mindfulness exercises such as the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise or the Raisin Exercise can be used. For this research, the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise.

## TWO SKILLS DIAGRAM



### Exercise 1

#### Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 mins)

In this exercise, the participant was asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture”*

The participant was asked to close his eyes. He was asked to breathe in through his nose and exhale out from his mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations on his toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). He was then asked to move his attention to any sensations or temperature change on his hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations on your toes and feet” (2 mins)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change on your hands and fingers” (2 mins)*

Encouraged participant to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. Encouraged participant to come back to the sensations when he has drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations” (2 mins)*

Next the participant was asked to put his focus on his abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the tummy with each breathe he took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your tummy” (2 mins)*

The participant was then asked to focus on his whole body and to feel the sensations throughout his body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body” (2 mins)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open his eyes and come back to the room at his own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room”*

### Debrief

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what he has noticed during the exercise. Once he has shared his experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. Reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

Participant shared his experience

- ‘Sounds became louder...I feel that the world became noisier. I heard stilettos...was feeling my pulse and feeling how tired my right foot was because I am right handed. The deep breathing part was good, it helped me relaxed’
- ‘I felt like slow motion.... I usually breathe but I do not breathe slowly so when I breathed slowly I think, I more alert to the surroundings which is always there just that it became noise when I am not being mindful when I am breathing quite fast and shallow’
- “Even the temperature. I don’t really like cold temperature”

Asked whether he was deliberately trying not to think about any fleeting thoughts

- “I was shutting out because it feels comfortable and pay attention to my body for a while”
- “I thought my body needs a break. So, I check out my toes and fingers”
- “I think it is very hard to cut something out but to focus on something else might work”

Told participant the exercise was meant to help him slow down and be mindful and aware of the present rather than to be caught up all the different things that were happening but to focus on here and now. Reiterated about acceptance and focus on the presence.

## Values and Values-Driven Actions

In this part, participant learned about what values were and how values were important to guide his daily behaviours.

The participant was asked what values meant to them.

*“What do values mean to you?”*

Participant shared:

- “If it is something that I value, it means a lot to me all the time”.
- “I like to place my value on family because I think it is more important. In different organizations there are different values, I can change myself to suit them but that does not mean they are my values...but my family does not change, for me it keeps me grounded more”
- Participant elaborated on the word family as a value when asked
- “Value of responsibility to and relationship with the family” Asked what would it be as a tangible action?
- “To provide for both money and time” Asked how would he go about doing that?
- “Keeping down a job”
- Participant shared that if he wants to spend more time with his dad and if he needs to sacrifice his career, he would do so. “For me it is very fluid...I struggle with anything constant”

Asked Participant what goals are

- Explained to him that goals are time based and achievable by actions
- Asked participant what he considered as internal and external barriers
  - Explained to him what both internal and external barriers are: mind telling him not to come and meet the researchers because of the location and the weather.
- Reinforced the above points
  - Values are guides to our daily behaviours and goals are indeed time stamped. Both types of barriers will prevent us from working towards the values.

## Compass Metaphor – Goals and Values

To reiterate the difference between goals and values, the Compass Metaphor (Hayes et al, 1999, See Appendix 36) was used. The participant was asked to choose a direction from the Compass (that was to signify the Values). Once participant have chosen the direction for his Values, he was asked to identify landmarks (Short Term goals) along the road to his chosen direction. The participant was then asked to identify the next destination (Long Term goals). The participant was then asked what immediate steps he would take to walk towards his chosen directions.



*“Look at the compass and choose a direction, that would signify your values”*

*P – “South.”*

*“Next please identify any landmarks along the road to your chosen direction, this will be your short term goals”*

*P – “A lamp post”*

*“Please identify the next destination along the road to your chosen direction, this will be your long term goals”*

*P – “Cross road”*

*“What immediate steps would you take to walk towards your chosen directions, this would be your values based actions”*

*P – “Learn not to be too passive and walk away from unhappy stuff”*

*P – “I think my struggle is that I like to keep things to myself like sweeping under the carpet. If I have to deal with the issues, I will deal with them myself.”*

*P - For example, “I am passive and allow others to trample on me to a certain extent, I do have a threshold, I think I can see the difference between reason and company values, profits and interest. That is something I do not agree with, I can continue to do things as indicated in my contract but if the treatment is different because of personal reasons like taking sides on certain project and stuff, I think I am quite uncomfortable with that”*

*P - “Faced with a conflict, I choose to walk away after trying to explain my perspective. I find it unreasonable when people refused to see both sides of the perspective and expect you to take their perspective for the truth”*

## **Value Cards**

Participant was then presented with the values cards (See Appendix 35). Participant was instructed to choose from the values cards and classified them as many values that He want and grouped them into 3 categories: least important, moderately important and most important. From the most important category, he was to choose 5 top values.

*“Please look at these values cards, He are categorised as follow: caring for myself, connecting with others, challenging myself, valuing in the presence of difficulty. In each of the category there are 8 different values. You can choose as many values as you want from any of the categories”*

*“Once you have chosen the values, please put them into the following 3 categories: least important, moderately important and most important”*

*“When you have categorised the values accordingly, please choose 5 top values from the most important category”*

The participant was then presented with Handout 1 (See Appendix 37). Participant was presented with 5 Values (Life) Areas: Your Health Values, Your Relationship Values, Your Work and Career Values, Your Leisure Time Values, and Your Personal Growth Values. Participant was told to choose 1 Value Area from the 5. He was then asked to choose which of the 5 important values he has chosen from the values card and write them under his chosen Value Area. He was then asked to write a value statement and about 3 to 5 value reminder words for his chosen value (see Handout 1). After that he was asked to fill in Handout 2 (See Appendix 38) where he was required to indicate which Values (Life) Areas he has chosen, the value reminder words, the short term, medium and long term goals, values based actions. He was also required to write down any internal barriers that might prevent them from fulfilling his values goals and actions. He was instructed to do home practices (a mindfulness exercise and values-based actions) between session one and session two in Handout 3 (see Appendix 39). The one week gap between sessions one and two allowed participant to practise the mindfulness exercise and values-based actions (p44, Flaxman, Bond & Liveheim, 2013).

#### Handout 1

*“Please choose which Value Area you would like to work on for the coming week”*

*“Decide which of your top 5 value that you would like to work on for the coming week”*

*“Based on the value you have chosen for the Value Area, please write down a value statement and about 3 to 5 reminder words for that chosen value”*

#### Handout 2

*“Under the Value column, please indicate the Value Area and the Value you would be working on for the coming week”*

*“Please also write down the reminder words for the chosen value”*

*“Under the Goals column, please write down the short term goals, medium term goals and long term goals”*

*“Under the Actions column, please write 3 value based actions that you would be working on for the coming week”*

Before briefing the Home Practices, the participant was reminded about the Two Skills Diagram (Appendix 34). The participant was also introduced to a Two Sheets of Paper Technique (see Appendix 40). One of sheets have the word “VALUE” and the other with “UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS”. The purpose of showing the two papers to the participant was to reiterate that the training that He have gone through was to help them work towards his VALUES despite the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS. The point was to accept the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS in the background and work towards his values.

*“You will see before you two sheets of paper. One with the word VALUES and the other with the words UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS. The purpose of the training you have gone through was to help you work towards your VALUES (the VALUES sheet of paper was moved slightly to the front while the other sheet of paper was moved slightly behind) and to accept the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS in the background”*

After the participant was presented with the Two Sheets of Paper Techniques, he was briefed on the Home Practices 1 and 2.

### **Home Practices 1 and 2**

For Home Practice 1, the participant was asked to engage mindfully on the three valued actions that he would be performing over the following week. He was encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies. He was encouraged to notice what happens when he perform the chosen actions. He was required to write down any thoughts, feelings that would show up before, during and after he has performed each action. He was also asked to take notice of how others would respond and any consequences of his actions.

*“For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three valued based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice”*

*“Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions”*

*“Do take notice of how others responded to your actions and also was there any consequences to your actions”*

For Home Practice 2, the participant was asked to take about 10 minutes to practice mindfulness breathing exercise. He was asked to record any observations and comments.

*“For home practice 2, please spend about 10 minutes to practice mindfulness breathing exercise. You can use the Brief Body and Breathe Awareness Exercise for this practice”*

Once the instructions for the home practices was explained, the first session ended with the participant and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session.

### **Session 2 – 30 Oct 2017 at 12pm (1hr 30 mins) at Jusco Singapore.**

In this session, the researcher would review the participant’s home practices and the participant would continue to learn skills to help them work towards his values. The skills were taught using five exercises: Monsters in the Bus (see Appendix 41), Defusion Technique (see Appendix 42), Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Demonstration of

Fusion/Defusion and Physicalizing exercise, to help the participant learn psychological acceptance and perspective thinking. Before all these, to kick off session 2, the participant was asked to do the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise.

### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 mins)**

In this exercise, the participant was asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture”*

The participant was asked to close his eyes. He was asked to breathe in through his nose and exhale out from his mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations on his toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). He was then asked to move his attention to any sensations or temperature change on his hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations on your toes and feet” (2 mins)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change on your hands and fingers” (2 mins)*

Encouraged participant to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. Encouraged participant to come back to the sensations when he has drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations” (2 mins)*

Next the participant was asked to put his focus on his abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the tummy with each breathe he took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your tummy” (2 mins)*

The participant was then asked to focus on his whole body and to feel the sensations throughout his body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body” (2 mins)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open his eyes and come back to the room at his own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room”*

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what he noticed during the exercise. Once he has shared his experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. Reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

In the debrief, the participant shared about his experience.

*P - "Nagging neck ache... no other thoughts, generally was blank"*

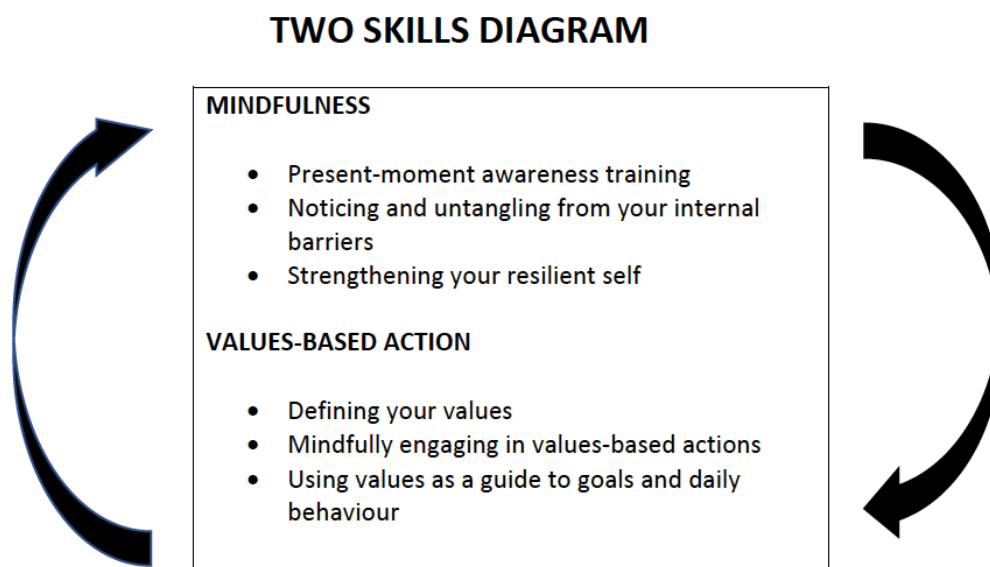
Told participant that it was good that he focused on the sensations and not let thoughts or emotions take over. Also introduce to the participant the skills set to be learned in this session – noticing.

### **Reviewing of Home Practices**

In session two, participant's home practices were reviewed. The researcher was able to determine whether participant had applied the skills he had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries and reinforce concepts of values and values-based actions.

### **Home Practice 1 – Values Based Actions**

Using the Two Skills Diagram, reiterated to the participant the relationship between mindfulness and values based actions. Checked with the participant which values based action he had performed, what he had noticed before, during and after he had performed the actions. He was also asked to share what values based actions he did not perform. The participant was also asked to share internal and external barriers that prevented them to perform the values based actions.



*“Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values based actions.”*

*“Please share with me what was the values based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?”*

*“Were there any values based actions that you did not perform?”*

*“What was the internal and external barriers that have prevented you from performing the values based actions?”*

Participant shared his experience performing the values based actions (VBA)

VBA – To have coffee with others

- “I felt normal when I meet up with friends with coffee”, “Caffeine helps me to be calm to listen to others”, “I was present at the moment, the coffee grounds me”, “it is a good activity”

VBA – Listen and allow others to talk

- “To join enjoy the coffee and to listen to others”
- “It was fulfilling”

VBA – offer honest opinions (open dialogue)

- “Use “to be honest” to start conversations”

Internal barriers

- “Subconsciously I want to be honest, but it’s just that I have lots of filters, I just took the filters away, it helps to talk to a friend who obviously needs an opinion”
- Fear of not acknowledging my friend’s feelings
- Fear of conflict or misunderstanding by other party
- Worried about quoting out of context

## **Home Practice 2 – Mindfulness Exercise**

Participant was asked about his experience with regards to the mindfulness exercise, how much time he spent each day for the mindfulness exercise, his observations and comments.

*“Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercise”*

*“How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?”*

*“What were your observations?”*

The participant shared his experience

Participant shared that he attempted 7 days of mindfulness exercise (Breathing and meditation).

P - “I usually do it before I go to sleep”

Observations (Noticing about own body)

- Relaxed and mindful of the body
- Tiredness
- More relaxed
- Feeling body is a bit lighter than before
- Body Awareness
- Feeling neck ache

Encouraged and asked participant if he could think any other mindfulness exercises

- Participant mentioned swimming, “When I am in the water, I feel very calm” (Exercising helps him to calm) and “concentrate on the breathing and strokes gliding through the water”

### **Exercise 1 - Monsters (Passengers) in the Bus**

The purpose of this exercise was to teach the participant about psychological acceptance. The participant was shown a picture with monsters (passengers) in the bus. The participant was told that he was the driver of the Bus of Life and the monsters (passengers) on the bus represented his thoughts, feelings, moods and urges. The participant was told that as the driver, his chosen direction was to go towards his chosen values and the passengers was there to distract him from going towards his values. Participant was asked what he would do in such a situation.

*“This is a picture we call monsters in the bus. You are the driver of this Bus of Life and the monsters represent your thoughts, feelings, moods and urges. As the driver, you have a chosen direction to go towards your values, but the monsters are here to distract you from going towards your values. What would you do in this situation?”*

Participant was asked what he should do? (Using his VBA to the context)

- “I should keep driving”

- “I think it is like sometimes you take a different route to a place, people have different opinions, even the GPS has a different opinion, but I think at the end of the day, you need to trust your driver...”
- “I might make a compromise.” How?
- “As you are driving you are looking at the fastest way or less congested way”

Asked whether he would confront those thoughts and emotions

- “I might just offer a suggestion that maybe I took this path, I show you that new café, check out the place as we drive pass”
- “Not your usual route but it is not a bad idea”

Asked whether is he acknowledging the thoughts and emotions on the bus?

- “I think I have to... people who are on the bus, there is a set route, cannot deviate”
- I have to drive on but at the same time I will make them understand I do hear what they are saying. But if I listen to everyone, we will not get to the destination. If there is an end point in mind, we have to settle on the route that is best for all.”
- “I struggle to draw a line between an emotion and thought, I want to let the thought not affect my feelings, if not it will affect the way I drive”
- “However, if there is one passenger who is very very aggressive, I might just say why don’t you take over”
- Participant acknowledged that if he lets his emotions and thoughts drive it is dangerous – because it is not rational and thus will affect the journey

Debrief

- How to work with negative thoughts and emotions and work towards the value
- How to untangle from the thoughts and emotions.

## **Exercise 2 - Defusion Technique**

The purpose of this skill (defusion technique) was to help participant become aware of the unhelpful thoughts, emotions and moods He would experience and not to be entangled by them. The researcher highlighted the reasons for untangling oneself from thoughts, emotions and moods. The researcher explained to the participant: 1) how internal barriers (thoughts, emotions and moods) could cripple his well-being, 2) how the mind in the course of trying to protect them would end up being unhelpful as it would start to judge them, and 3) how when he was too caught up with his mind’s output would missed experiencing the present (this was to enforce mindfulness). The participant was then asked to write down unhelpful thoughts on Handout 4 (see Appendix 42), that have prevented them from pursuing his values based actions or goals.



*“Often we get caught up with our thoughts, emotions and moods and when we spend too much time on them, we tend to lose out on the experience of the present”*

*“Our mind will constantly be trying to help us in making us ruminate but that can be unhelpful as the mind will then start to judge us”*

*“Please use the handout 4 and write down some of the unhelpful thought that have prevented you from pursuing your values based actions or goals”*

Participant shared: Negative thought - Fear of conflict

### **Exercise 3 – Cartoon Voice Technique**

The purpose of using this technique was to create awareness about negative thoughts, emotions and moods as just what he was as a bit of a language (p 60, Harris, 2008) and not to take them too seriously. Using a cartoon voice and repeating the negative thoughts, emotions and moods, participant would be able to hear them in a different voice and He would lose his impact.

The participant was asked to take one of the unhelpful thoughts that he had labelled in the earlier exercise and focus on the impact of the that unhelpful thought. He was then asked to choose a cartoon voice. The participant was then asked to hear the unhelpful thought through the voice of the cartoon voice he has chosen. The participant was then asked to look at the unhelpful thoughts and notice any impact. Once the participant has shared his experience, the researcher reiterated the importance of being aware of the negative thought and that it was merely language.

*“From the negative thoughts you have identified earlier, focus on one of them and its impact.”*

*“Next please choose a cartoon character you like and hear that negative thought through the voice of the cartoon character.”*

P – “Kung Fu Panda”

*“Focus on the negative thoughts and notice any impact.”*

P - “very funny. It is probably not that serious”

*“The purpose of this technique is to help you to recognise and be aware of negative thoughts and that they are merely words, not to be take them too seriously.”*

## Debrief

Participant was taught how to use a cartoon voice to repeat the unhelpful thoughts he had. The purpose of using the cartoon voice was to let the participant realise that the unhelpful thoughts, emotions or moods was just part of a language and by repeating the unhelpful thoughts, emotions and moods in a cartoon voice, they would lose their impact.

P - "because it is funny and not that serious, therefore I do not feel so affected, therefore it might not be that bad"

Explained about RFT how we attribute words to thoughts and emotions, it becomes an issue.

## Exercise 4 – Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion (Harris 2009)

This exercise was used to demonstrate fusion and defusion and helped participant to be aware and be able to watch his thoughts. The participant was asked to write down an unhelpful thought as big as possible to cover a piece of paper. Once he has done so, he was asked to hold the paper tightly and held it up touching his nose. The participant was asked to look passed the paper (his unhelpful thought) at his surroundings. The participant was asked to describe the experience. He was then asked to move the paper slightly away from his nose and to hold the paper less tightly. The participant was asked to describe any difference between the two perspectives. He should reply that now he could see the unhelpful thought and his surroundings. Next the participant was asked to fully stretched out his arms still holding the paper and hold it till his arms ache. Once he was no longer able to hold up the paper, he was asked to put the paper down on his lap. The participant was then asked about his experience.

*"Please think of an unhelpful thought and write it as big as possible to cover the piece of paper."*

*"Please hold up the paper and place it touching your nose and then look pass the paper at your surroundings."*

P - "It is difficult, and I cannot see anything"

"Now move the paper slightly away from your nose and tell me what you see?"

P – "I can see the negative thought clearer, but I see everything else and I think it is not as big, it is smaller in comparison to the background."

*"Still holding your paper stretch your arm fully. Once you feel that your arms are aching, put your arms down and place them on your lap"*

P - "it is still there but I am focusing on everything else"

## Debrief

The participant was told that it was important to be aware of the unhelpful thoughts but to be mindful not to spend too much time on these thoughts as this would result in them missing out on things that was happening around them (when he put the paper touching his nose and he would be able to be in the moment). He would begin to see his surroundings and notice his thoughts when he put the paper slightly away from his nose (this was to create a healthy psychological distance from the unhealthy thoughts). He would learn to accept and be aware of the unhelpful thoughts but not actively trying to fight them when he put the paper down on his laps. This move was meant to allow the participant to experience unhelpful thoughts and be present at the moment, that is to be defusing from his unhelpful thoughts. (Hayes et al, 1999; Harris, 2009)

## Exercise 5 - Physicalizing Exercise

The purpose of teaching the participant this physicalizing exercise was to cultivate emotional acceptance skills. Similar to the defusion exercise before, this exercise was meant to help the participant to create a psychological distance between themselves and his emotions, moods and thoughts. The exercise sought to encourage the participant to open up about an uncomfortable emotion and notice the impact of the emotion as physical sensations that was experienced throughout his body. The participant was asked to objectify the feeling/sensation he experienced as an object out of his body. He was then asked to welcome the objectified feeling back to his body, as a form of acceptance of that feeling.

*“Please close your eyes and notice your body sensations and feeling as you breathe in and out. To focus on the sensations in your toes, hands tummy and the whole body. When your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back and notice the sensations.”*

*“Now I would like you to think of a stressful event, situation or a person and think on it for a few minutes. While you are doing this, be aware of any changes taking place in your body, for example feelings or physical reaction”*

Participant shared his experience

P – “I feel heavy on my shoulders”

P - “a big black round object. As it comes out it became smaller and when it went back to the same place, but it did not feel as bad as before it popped out”

P – “same place but not as heavy”

P – “I feel there is a slight change in the way I view the object.”

Reiterated that this is a form psychological distance and a form of defusion technique.

## Debrief

The participant was asked to share his experience in this physicalizing exercise. The participant was asked what the feeling was and the form it took as an object, its shape and weight. To reiterate that it was important to be able to notice feeling or emotion for what it actually was and where it can reside in the body. The purpose of objectifying the feeling or emotion and popping it out of the body was intended to create a healthy psychological distance between the person and his/her feeling and emotions. To reinforce psychological distance, the researcher did a quick hand as emotions exercise. Together with the participant, the researcher used his hands as emotions and covered his eyes. This was to indicate that as a person was embroiled in his or her feelings/emotions, he or she would find it difficult to look beyond them. But by moving the hands slightly away, this created a psychological distance that in turn provided a mindful perspective of the feelings/emotions.

## **Home Practices 1, 2 and 3 (Handout 6 – Appendix 43)**

For Home Practice 1, the participant was asked to engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that he would be performing over the following week. He was encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies. He was encouraged to notice what happened when he performed the chosen actions. He was required to write down any thoughts and feelings that would show up before, during and after he has performed each action. He was also asked to take notice of how others responded and any consequences of his actions.

*“For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice.”*

*“Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions.”*

*“Do take notice of how others respond to your actions and also whether there are any consequences to your actions.”*

For Home Practice 2, the participant was asked to achieve four values-based goals before Session 3. He was asked to focus on his short term goals.

*“For home practice 2, please look at the four short term goals you have recorded in session 2. Please achieve these goals. Stay present and notice what happens as you pursue these goals.”*

For Home Practice 3, the participant was asked to take about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. He was asked to record any observations and comments.

*“For home practice 3, please spend about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. You can use the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise for this practice. You will be given 4 copies to record your practice.”*

The participant was also given Handout 6 (See Appendix 43). This handout was meant to help participant, if he preferred, to visualize his behavioural process. The squiggly line diagonally up the centre of the page signified that to achieve a values-based direction, the process to be followed would be filled with twists and turns. The rectangular boxes were used for values-based actions and the empty scrolls represented the values-based goals the participants would like to achieve.

Once the instructions for the home practices had been explained, the second session ended with the participant and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session. The next session was scheduled to take place one month later.

### **Session 3 – 30 Nov 2017, 4pm, 1 hour 30 mins, JustCo, Singapore (after 4 weeks)**

In session three, the participant’s home practices for the whole month were reviewed. The researcher reviewed the mindfulness exercises and values-based actions. In doing so, the researcher was able to see whether the participant had used the skills he had learned and had progressed in their values-based actions. Similarly, queries were clarified, and concepts were reinforced.

In this session, the participant was asked to answer only the WAAQ questionnaire. This was in order to determine whether the participant’s psychological flexibility scores had changed after the training sessions. In addition, the researcher conducted a short interview to understand how the participant viewed the whole skills training process. To encourage him to carry on practising the new acquired skills, the participant was presented with home practices for further practice (Handouts 7 and 8 – see Appendices 44 and 45). To start this session, the participant was led to do a shorter version of the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes). This was to create awareness and mindfulness.

#### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes)**

In this exercise, the participant was asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.”*

The participant was asked to close his eyes. He was asked to breathe in through their nose and exhale out from his mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth.”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations in his toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). He was then asked to move their attention to any sensations or temperature change in his hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations in your toes and feet.”* (1 minute)

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change in your hands and fingers.”* (1 minute)

The participant was asked to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. The participant was asked to come back to the sensations when he had drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations.”* (1 minute)

Next the participant was asked to put his focus on his abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the abdomen with each breath he took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your abdomen.”* (1 minute)

The participant was then asked to focus on his whole body and to feel the sensations throughout his body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body.”* (1 minute)

Lastly, the participant was asked to open his eyes and come back to the room in his own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room.”*

*“Share with me your experience.”*

### Debrief

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what he noticed during the exercise. Once he has shared his experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. Reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

After the participant shared about his experience, a debrief was done

P - “It was relaxing and calming to just focus on myself. I still feel my neck ache. No other thoughts”

P - “I practice my mindfulness exercise regularly”.

### **Review of Home Practices**

The purpose of reviewing the home practice was to enable the researcher to determine whether the participant had applied the skills he had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries pertaining to the home practices, skills learned and reinforce the concepts of values and values-based actions.

### **Home Practice 1 – Values Based Actions**

Using the Two Skills Diagram (see Appendix 34), the relationship between mindfulness and values-based actions was reiterated to the participant. The researcher checked with the participant which values-based actions he had performed, what he had noticed before, during and after he had performed the actions. He was asked to share what values-based actions he has not performed. The participant was also asked to share internal and external barriers that prevented him from performing his values-based actions.

*“Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values based actions.”*

*“Please share with me what were values-based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?”*

*“Were there any value- based actions that you did not perform?”*

*“What were the internal and external barriers that prevented you from performing the values-based actions?”*

Participant shared his experience

- Participant shared that the values-based exercise was good as he felt fulfilled and inspired by gaining knowledge through reading. In doing the actions, he felt better about his career and that now he has a direction. Still working on going for courses. Have not had a conversation with a mentor yet

Internal barriers: “Felt progress was slow”, “Can wait...no rush”

External barriers: “I have to take care of my dad and bring him to the hospital”, “the weather is too hot, and I am tired”

### **Home Practice 2 – Four Value-Based Goals**

Participant was asked whether he had achieved performing the four value-based goals. He was asked to share what he had noticed when he pursued the goals.

*“I would like to check whether you did achieve the four values-based goals?”*

*“What did you notice when you were pursuing the goals?”*

P – “I have yet to complete all the goals, they are still ongoing”.

P – “I feel fulfilled when I work towards the goal.”

### **Home Practice 3 – Mindfulness Exercise**

Participant was asked about his experience with regards to the mindfulness exercises, how much time he had spent each day for the mindfulness exercise, their observations, and comments.

*“Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercises.”*

*“How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?”*

*“What were your observations?”*

Participant shared his experience

P – “I have been practicing mindfulness exercise before sleep, just breathing and meditation. It relaxes both my body and mind. Also bring awareness to my neck ache.”

### **Values Consistency Exercise – Handout 7 (see Appendix 44)**

After reviewing the home practices, the participant was asked to fill in Handout 7. The purpose of doing this was to see whether how value consistent the participant had been for the past 1 month.

After he had completed filling up Handout 7, the researcher went through the information with the participant. The researcher asked the participant about the areas which were not consistent with his values, and their reasons for that. This allowed the researcher to reinforce the concepts and skills learned in previous sessions.

*“Thank you for filling up Handout 7, let us go through the handout.”*

*“There were some areas you have marked not consistent with your values. Could you share with me why this is so?”*

After the participant had completed Handout 7, the researcher proceeded to administer the WAAQ.



## WAAQ (see pages 8 and 9 of Appendix 29)

As stated, the purpose of asking the participant to fill this questionnaire was to see whether his psychological flexibility had changed after the skills learning sessions and home practices. The participant was asked to answer the 7 questions in the questionnaire – WAAQ.

*“I would like to ask you 7 statements and please answer them as truthfully as you can.”*

*“Statement 1 – I am able to work effectively in spite of any personal worries that I have. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 2 – I can admit to my mistakes at work and still be successful.*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 3 – I can still work very effectively even if I am nervous about something.*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 4 – Worries do not get in the way of my success. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 5 – I can perform as required no matter how I feel. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 6 – I can work effectively even when I doubt myself. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 7 – My thoughts and feelings do not get in the way of my work. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

After the participant had completed the 7 statements, he was asked how the processes had helped him with regards to negative thoughts and emotions.

*“Please share with me how the processes have helped you with regards to negative thoughts and emotions.”*

Participant shared his experience

P – “I am calmer and more relaxed, self-awareness, learn to accept my negative thoughts and emotions. Learn more about myself in terms of my psychological functions and how I can be a better person and deal with my work and my life.”

### **Research Debrief**

The research debrief was intended to let the participants know the purpose of the skills training sessions and how the skills could help helping those who had been exposed to workplace bullying.

The researcher explained the strategies used by victims of workplace bullying and how they could only be useful to a certain extent. For example, when victims were not able to seek redress, they could resort to counterproductive behaviours such as retaliation or being absent from work. If the strategies used were unsuccessful, victims might choose to leave. However, while leaving can help victims to stop bullying, victims continue to carry with them the emotional baggage of that experience, which can affect their psychological well-being. This could include rumination of the bullying experience and self-blame. In the workplace bullying literature, to date, there is no research focusing on how individuals can help themselves when they are being bullied (self-intervention).

The skills training sessions formed part of the self-intervention. The skills learned from the sessions cover the six core processes of the therapy Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. A brief explanation of the six processes were explained to the participants. The researcher then linked the skills learned to the bullying experiences the participant had gone through. This was done to allow the participant to see how the skills could be used to help him in managing the negative thoughts and emotions he might have felt or continued to be feeling due to his exposure to bullying.

*“Thank you for participating in all the sessions. I would like to take this opportunity to explain to you the purpose of my research.”*

*“As you know, workplace bullying is unavoidable and often people will use various ways to counteract it. These could be direct or indirect ways. For example, an individual can choose to resort to behaving counterproductively, such as by retaliation or by being absent from work. However, when these strategies do not work, an individual may choose to leave the organisation. Although these strategies do provide a resolution for an individual, he or she would leave the organization carrying the baggage of the bullying experience and this can often impact on their psychological well-being. That is, the individual could spend time ruminating about their bullying experience and blame himself or herself for what had happened.”*

*“Workplace bullying research to date has not address what bullied individuals could do to help themselves (self-intervention).”*

*“That is why the main focus of this research is to find a way to help bullied individuals.”*

*“The skills training sessions are part of the six processes of the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. The six processes are: acceptance, cognitive defusion, self as context, present, values and committed actions. The six processes enable an individual to become psychologically flexible, that is not to get stuck in negative thoughts, emotions, or moods, but instead to look at what matters to him or her (values) and to spend time working towards that.”*

*“The mindfulness exercise allows us to be aware of our surroundings, how we can be affected physically and physiologically when we are caught up with negative thoughts, emotions, and moods.” (Self-Awareness)*

*“Monsters in the Bus, Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Defusion/Fusion Exercise and Physicalizing Exercise help an individual to accept and defuse negative thoughts, emotions, and moods. In using these, an individual will learn to create a psychological distance between himself and herself and the negative thoughts, emotions and moods. (self-as-context, a form of perspective taking)*

*“Home practices of stating values and values-based actions encourage individuals to use the skills of acceptance, defusion and perspective taking to work towards their values-based goals.”*

*“When applying these skills in the context of workplace bullying, an individual will learn not to let the bullying experience deter him or her from working towards his or her important values. So instead of trying hard to fight the bullying or the emotions, the individual will focus on what are the best ways to counteract the bullying (values- based action) and not let negative thoughts, emotions and moods derail him or her from the values.”*

Once the research debriefs had been completed, the researcher encouraged the participant to continue the home practices. The participant was given Handout 8 (see Appendix 45). The participant was told to follow the previous instructions that were given for the home practices if he decided to carry on.

*“Thank you once again for participating in this research. I would like to give you Handout 8. Although your participation in this research has ended, I would encourage you to carry on doing the home practices that are contained in Handout 8. You can use the previous instructions to help you continue your home practices.”*

To conclude the session, the participant was thanked again for his participation. He was assured that all data collected would only be used for this research and would be anonymised. He was told that should he decide not to have his data used for this research, he would need to contact the researcher.

## **PARTICIPANT 5 - THL FOR ACT INTERVENTION**

### **Session 1 – 4 Jan 2018, 12pm, (1 hour 30 mins) at Naked Hub New Street, Hong Kong**

Participant was identified to have experienced bullying and have seen bullying done to others. He shared that one of the reasons he left was because he was bullied.

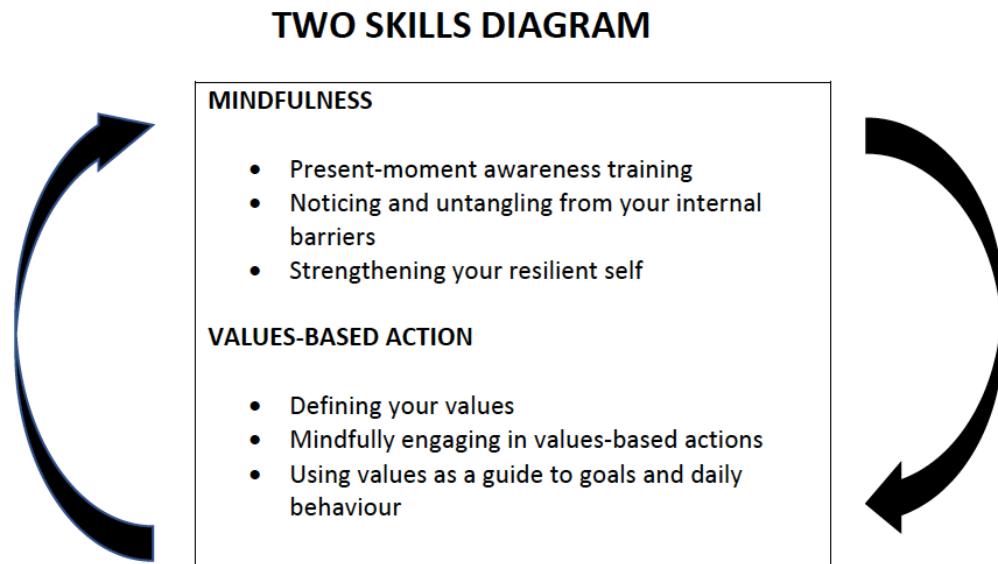
- Someone withholding information which affects your performance
  - Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with work
  - Being ordered to do work below your level of competence
  - Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks
  - Spreading of gossip and rumours about you
  - Being ignored, excluded or being “Sent to Coventry”
  - Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life
  - Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)
  - Intimidating behaviour such as finger pointing, invasions of personal space, showing, blocking/barring the way
  - Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job
  - Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes
  - Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach
  - Persistent criticism of your work and effort
  - Having your opinions and views ignored
  - Practical joke carried out by people you don’t get on with
  - Being given task with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines
  - Having allegations made against you
  - Excessive monitoring of your work
  - Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm
  - Being exposed to an unmanageable workload
- 
- In the session, the participant was told about the 3 separate sessions (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in consecutive weeks and 3<sup>rd</sup> session to be done in a months’ time)
  - Participant was informed that the sessions are to expose her to the psychological and behavioural skills training
  - Also mentioned to him the importance of practicing the skills in between the sessions as they are part of the training
  - Showed him the two skills diagram and emphasised the relationship between mindfulness and also values based action

### **The Components of the Skills Training**

Participant was briefed on the components of the skills training. With the use of a Two Skills diagram (see Appendix 34), he was briefed about the relationship between mindfulness skills training and values-based actions.

The participant was told that both mindfulness and values based action worked together. He was told that in the three sessions, he would learn mindfulness exercises and would be putting them in practice as part of his home assignments. He was also told that after each session, he would be given home assignments to be completed before the next session.

To create awareness, mindfulness exercises such as the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise or the Raisin Exercise can be used. For this research, the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise.



#### Exercise 1

##### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 mins)**

In this exercise, the participant was asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture”*

The participant was asked to close his eyes. He was asked to breathe in through his nose and exhale out from his mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations on his toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). He was then asked to move his attention to any sensations or temperature change on his hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations on your toes and feet” (2 mins)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change on your hands and fingers” (2 mins)*

Encouraged participant to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. Encouraged participant to come back to the sensations when he has drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations” (2 mins)*

Next the participant was asked to put his focus on his abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the tummy with each breathe he took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your tummy” (2 mins)*

The participant was then asked to focus on his whole body and to feel the sensations throughout his body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body” (2 mins)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open his eyes and come back to the room at his own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room”*

### Debrief

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what He noticed during the exercise. Once he has shared his experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. Reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

In the debrief, the participant shared about his experience.

- ‘I noticed my heart rate got slower and calmer. More focus, alert, self-awareness, obviously there were fleeting thoughts, but things/thoughts have less effect on me”
- “Tingling sensation, blood flowing, more self-awareness about the body, toes, fingers, abs”
- “I felt strained in my legs because I have just been to the gym. I actually do similar mindfulness exercise when I walk my dog everyday”
- “When fleeting thoughts came, I suppose it’s like I will solve them later. My fleeting thoughts are always action orientated, what needs to be done, a to do list kind of thing so it’s more like ok I do not need to worry about it now, let’s put it aside, kind of compartmentalising it. It’s like I sometimes visually put it in a cupboard and hide it away. I have this problem when I sleep where in the middle of the night I wake up thinking about something... I think the mindfulness exercise help because I can put this away and I focus on my breathing and recognize how tired my body is and try to go to sleep. That works...I think about physically move the things away”

## Values and Values-Driven Actions

In this part, the participant learned about what values was and how values were important in helping to guide his daily behaviours.

The participant was asked what values meant to them.

*“What do values mean to you?”*

P - “Value systems, what you value most, some people value different things like emotional health, money, relationships. People are driven by different values systems. People also judge the world based on their value system too”

*“What would you considered as internal and external barriers that would prevent you from achieving your goals and values?”*

P – “over thinking is internal and too caught up with things happening around you is external”

- Reiterated the points shared by the participant and told him
  - o Values are guides to our daily behaviours and goals are indeed time stamped. Both types of barriers will prevent us from working towards the values.

## Compass Metaphor – Goals and Values

To reiterate the difference between goals and values, the Compass Metaphor (Hayes et al, 1999, See Appendix 36) was used. The participant was asked to choose a direction from the Compass (that was to signify the Values). Once participant have chosen the direction for his Values, he was asked to identify landmarks (Short Term goals) along the road to his chosen direction. The participant was then asked to identify the next destination (Long Term goals). The participant was then asked what immediate steps he would take to walk towards his chosen directions.

*“Look at the compass and choose a direction, that would signify your values”*

P – “North.”

*“Next please identify any landmarks along the road to your chosen direction, this will be your short term goals”*

P - “North to me is forward looking”. “Moving forward and forget about the past...do not dwell on the past, be present and move forward and something good will come out from that situation”

*“Please identify the next destination along the road to your chosen direction, this will be your long term goals”*

*“What immediate steps would you take to walk towards your chosen directions, this would be your values based actions”*



P - "Forgiveness and also optimism... it is about looking forward. What I meant about moving forward is to let go of whatever negative things you have, be optimistic about the future." Participants agreed that both forgiveness and optimism are his values, and to achieve that is to let go of the past and move forward.

Asked participant about potential hurdles that will prevent him from moving forward

P - "Being grudging, seeking revenge, conflicts, dwelling on the past, guilty of yourself, pinning the blame on someone else" (Internal barriers)

Asked what he would do about these barriers.

P - "I am aware of these feelings, I think ultimately when I think of my goal of moving forward, I will know that these feelings do not help me to achieve my goals, that is why I believe that letting go is easier"

Asked what would he do if the feelings surface?

P - "I won't blame myself because I am human right, so I think about it and no action and lock it away and say something good will come out of it and move forward. Tell yourself that you will achieve the goal"

Wanted the participant to elaborate "locking away"

P - "I am aware of that and accept that these feelings will be there. It is just a fleeting moment, it is just your emotions and not what you truly are".

P - "Mind plays trick on you creating self-doubt, so you will have to separate yourself from the mind, that it is just a fleeting moment, the mind is playing tricks on you. I usually think of it as two persons: Me being Me and me being the emotional me. I don't mind having conflicts at the moment, but I will solve it eventually, I think the key thing is that that is the emotional me and the me, me. That is why I think it is better to move forward"

P - "Emotional you is an instantaneous you... the you you is not the same"  
"When you have gone through a trauma like cancer, you realise there is really two parts of you, the physical and the emotional side and you are totally different type of person. I feel like I can do this, but my body can't, that is where you know there is a detachment, there a lot of parts of you...my core self never changes, I think I know my value but the rest of it does change"

Reiterated what the participant said was a form of perspective taking (Self-as context)

Participant has a good grasp about values

### Debrief

Participant was told that values based actions allow them to be aware of his values, his sense of purpose, life direction and meaning. Values based actions enforced values as powerful guide to life goals and actions. Participant was told that these actions would help to enforce values as inner compass to help them navigate through challenging times and would guide them to make important decisions. It was reiterated to the participant that actions which was guided by his values was unlikely to be influenced by unhelpful thoughts, feelings, moods, and behavioural habits.

Participant shared about his bullying experience from his boss.

P - “ I could stay in the job trying to be spiteful towards him because he obviously hates me, I am really good at my job, I don’t care about his attitude but I want to be there to be spiteful but I then just realised, when I do that, I just felt that it is not moving forward, I am just being stuck in a place that he hates me and I don’t like him, I don’t like his values, what’s the point? That is why I decided no I have bigger priority in life. That is why I extricate myself, I think why should I indulge in my emotional of revenge and spitefulness, I move forward, I do not think about my boss now.”

Acknowledged what the participant said and also talk to him about how some people will lock away those emotions and they can also be triggered again. Using his example of emotional me to show him the propensity of easily indulging in the emotions and not able to rationalise – not to indulge but move forward to fulfil what is more important (Values). Reiterate acceptance and be mindful.

### **Value Cards**

Participant was then presented with the values cards (See Appendix 35). Participant was instructed to choose from the values cards and classified them as many values that he wanted and grouped them into 3 categories: least important, moderately important and most important. From the most important category, he was to choose 5 top values.

*“Please look at these values cards, He are categorised as follow: caring for myself, connecting with others, challenging myself, valuing in the presence of difficulty. In each of the category there are 8 different values. You can choose as many values as you want from any of the categories”*

*“Once you have chosen the values, please put them into the following 3 categories: least important, moderately important and most important”*

*“When you have categorised the values accordingly, please choose 5 top values from the most important category”*

The participant was then presented with Handout 1 (See Appendix 37). Participant was presented with 5 Values (Life) Areas: Your Health Values, Your Relationship Values, Your Work and Career Values, Your Leisure Time Values, and Your Personal Growth Values. Participant was told to choose 1 Value Area from the 5. He was then asked to choose which of the 5 important values he has chosen from the values card and write them under his chosen Value Area. He was then asked to write a value statement and about 3 to 5 value reminder words for his chosen value (see Handout 1). After that he was asked to fill in Handout 2 (See Appendix 38) where he was required to indicate which Values (Life) Areas he has chosen, the value reminder words, the short term, medium and long term goals, values based actions. He was also required to write down any internal barriers that might prevent them from fulfilling his values goals and actions. He was instructed to do home practices (a mindfulness exercise and values-based actions) between session one and session two in Handout 3 (see Appendix 39). The one week gap between sessions one and two allowed participant to practise the mindfulness exercise and values-based actions (p44, Flaxman, Bond & Liveheim, 2013).

## Handout 1

*“Please choose which Value Area you would like to work on for the coming week”*

*“Decide which of your top 5 value that you would like to work on for the coming week”*

*“Based on the value you have chosen for the Value Area, please write down a value statement and about 3 to 5 reminder words for that chosen value”*

## Handout 2

*“Under the Value column, please indicate the Value Area and the Value you would be working on for the coming week”*

*“Please also write down the reminder words for the chosen value”*

*“Under the Goals column, please write down the short term goals, medium term goals and long term goals”*

*“Under the Actions column, please write 3 value based actions that you would be working on for the coming week”*

Before briefing the Home Practices, the participant was reminded about the Two Skills Diagram (Appendix 34). The participant was also introduced to a Two Sheets of Paper Technique (see Appendix 40). One of sheets have the word “VALUE” and the other with “UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS”. The purpose of showing the two papers to the participant was to reiterate that the training that He have gone through was to help them work towards his VALUES despite the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS. The point was to accept the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS in the background and work towards his values.

*“You will see before you two sheets of paper. One with the word VALUES and the other with the words UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS. The purpose of the training you have gone through was to help you work towards your VALUES (the VALUES sheet of paper was moved slightly to the front while the other sheet of paper was moved slightly behind) and to accept the UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, MOODS AND FEELINGS in the background”*

After the participant was presented with the Two Sheets of Paper Techniques, he was briefed on the Home Practices 1 and 2.

## **Home Practices 1 and 2**

For Home Practice 1, the participant was asked to engage mindfully on the three valued actions that He would be performing over the following week. He was encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies. He was encouraged to notice what happens when he perform the chosen actions. He was required to write down any thoughts, feelings that would show up before, during and after he had performed each action. He was also asked to take notice of how others would respond and any consequences of his actions.

*“For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three valued based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice”*

*“Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions”*

*“Do take notice of how others responded to your actions and also was there any consequences to your actions”*

For Home Practice 2, the participant was asked to take about 10 minutes to practice mindfulness breathing exercise. He was asked to record any observations and comments.

*“For home practice 2, please spend about 10 minutes to practice mindfulness breathing exercise. You can use the Brief Body and Breathe Awareness Exercise for this practice”*

Once the instructions for the home practices was explained, the first session ended with the participant and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session.

## **Session 2 – 11 Jan 2018, 12:30pm (1 hour 30 mins) at Naked Hub, New Street HK**

In this session, the researcher would review the participant’s home practices and the participant would continue to learn skills to help them work towards his values. The skills were taught using five exercises: Monsters in the Bus (see Appendix 41), Defusion Technique (see Appendix 42), Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion and Physicalizing exercise, to help the participant learn psychological acceptance and perspective thinking. Before all these, to kick off session 2, the participant was asked to do the Brief Body and Breath Awareness exercise.

### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (10 mins)**

In this exercise, the participant was asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture”*

The participant was asked to close his eyes. He was asked to breathe in through his nose and exhale out from his mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations on his toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). He was then asked to move his attention to any sensations or temperature change on his hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations on your toes and feet” (2 mins)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change on your hands and fingers” (2 mins)*

Encouraged participant to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. Encouraged participant to come back to the sensations when he has drifted away.

*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations” (2 mins)*

Next the participant was asked to put his focus on his abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the tummy with each breathe he took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your tummy” (2 mins)*

The participant was then asked to focus on his whole body and to feel the sensations throughout his body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body” (2 mins)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open his eyes and come back to the room at his own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room*

### Debrief

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what he noticed during the exercise. Once he has shared his experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. Reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

In the debrief, the participant shared about his experience.

P - “I needed that after my exercise, I am actually exhausted, so it was nice to concentrate on my body”

Asked whether he has any fleeting thoughts during the breathing exercise

- “Lots, I was thinking about my phone calls, missed calls, thinking of catch up, obviously as the bell rang, it distracted me and also thinking about how tired I am, it is the brain that is telling me that I am tired, but my body is actually not. So, for me it is kind of good because as I was breathing in and out, I did not feel as tired as I should be”. So, it’s my brain thinking that I am tired, but my body is not. Feelings of tiredness dissipated a little bit because it’s kind of like when you focus on the sensations on your body, your body doesn’t give you the exhaustion sensation, just tingling, blood flowing, then you kind of feel like it is not too bad... so you see I can now lift up my coffee cup now because just now I was thinking this is so heavy I couldn’t lift it up, but now I can do it .
- Thoughts come and go

Asked participant whether did he pause to think about those thoughts or let them be

- “Let them flow out, actually I just think like when distractions come in I start to think, I just say stop thinking about it and come back to the room”

Reiterated the noticing of thoughts but not to be entangled by them

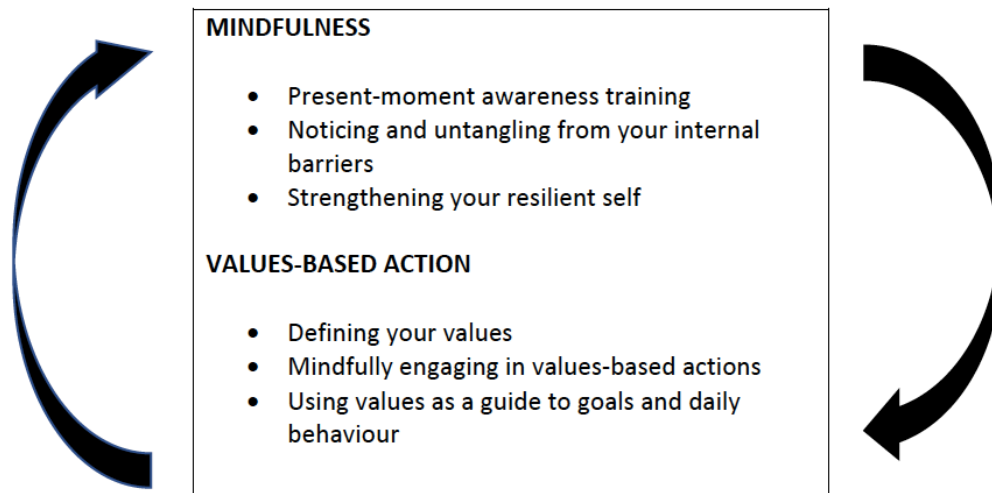
### **Reviewing of Home Practices**

In session two, the participant’s home practices were reviewed. The researcher was able to determine whether participant had applied the skills he had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries and reinforce concepts of values and values-based actions.

### **Home Practice 1 – Values Based Actions**

Using the Two Skills Diagram, reiterated to the participant the relationship between mindfulness and values based actions. Checked with the participant which values based action he had performed, what he had noticed before, during and after he had performed the actions. He was also asked to share what values based actions he did not perform. The participant was also asked to share internal and external barriers that prevented them to perform the values based actions.

## TWO SKILLS DIAGRAM



*“Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values based actions.”*

*“Please share with me what was the values based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?”*

*“Were there any values based actions that you did not perform?”*

*“What was the internal and external barriers that have prevented you from performing the values based actions?”*

### Values based action

- Internal barriers – worry, impatience, frustrations. Understood that dwelling on them only perpetuate thinking on things that will not happen. Recognised that when he did not focus too much on the negative thoughts that also impacted the thinking of his helper. Overthinking, lack of confidence negative sides increases (ego)
- External barriers – lack of time, distractions, adjusting to new work
- Realising that he wanted to change. Perception of self-value. Confident about his work even with a horrible boss “bullying is an external stimulus that keeps on creating negative emotions in which I can manage for a while, but I don’t like that. It’s like a tsunami of stimuli that you don’t like why do you subject yourself to that?” As for the present work, he felt that he is not able to perform as well as he was before in his previous job where he was more comfortable and confident about. When there is a change, people always doubt their capabilities and their value system - I am just going through that. I think I am managing pretty well. I think maybe why this negative ego and stuff is because of a self-need thing, why this frustration and impatient, I always tend to do that because I have self-doubt”

Asked participant whether using Values as a guide make him look at things differently?

- “Yes, because it pulled me out from my own thoughts all these things deep down inside are self-validation, but when you present the value system you want to focus on which is always about someone else (showing empathy) then when I put focus on it or mindful about that, I totally forgot about the self-validation thing which is great. That really help me to extract me away from the internal barriers”

## **Home Practice 2 – Mindfulness Exercise**

Participant was asked about his experience with regards to the mindfulness exercise, how much time he spent each day for the mindfulness exercise, his observations and comments.

*“Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercise”*

*“How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?”*

*“What were your observations?”*

The participant shared his experience

Participant shared that he attempted more of mindfulness exercise in the first week because he was conscious of the negative feelings. He did mindfulness exercise to prevent the negative feeling to overwhelm his mind as he was also frustrated about his helper. “I felt calmer after the mindfulness exercise the first few days within the week. He mentioned that after he has spoken to his helper on Sat, he felt less frustrated, “I felt less frustrated and I stopped doing the mindfulness exercise”. He shared that his frustration was due to the non-communicative helper however once they have talked, he felt that he was no longer frustrated, thus he did not resume the mindfulness exercise.

P - “To me is to focus on your being and to separate your ego and your emotions, so to me it is important to do it, mainly to prevent to your negative emotions to overwhelm you as a person and come out through your acts like frustration you can speak angrily to someone”

P - “I practiced mindfulness, it’s kind of like you breathe in you realised that this is just a negative nagging feeling, nagging part of you talking to you but not really how you feel. So that’s for me is mindfulness”

Felt the mindfulness exercise he did for the first 2.5 days helped him to become calmer and no negative thoughts (resentment, frustration – why is he not talking to us?)

External barrier: laziness.

Internal barrier: because he felt that he has dealt with his frustration(resolved).

Explained a bit more about mindfulness to the participant – his mindfulness is about quieting down and rationalise in your time, a popular way to do it. A popular way of mindfulness is through meditation. Mindfulness is also about experiencing the good and bad in the moment. Relating to his experiences such as listening to others – can be considered as a form of mindfulness (focusing on someone else – an act of being present). Reiterating about



mindfulness and present. He shared that mindfulness exercise allowed him to realise that he was worried about things he has no control of and did not know (accepting and noticing). He became calmer and was able to have an open conversation with his helper.

Gave suggestions to participant about other ways of being mindful. Being aware and present and not let thoughts and emotions affect him. To slow down and smell the flowers. Discourage suppression of thoughts and sensations but to accept that they are there.

### **Exercise 1 - Monsters (Passengers) in the Bus**

The purpose of this exercise was to teach the participant about psychological acceptance. The participant was shown a picture with monsters (passengers) in the bus. The participant was told that he was the driver of the Bus of Life and the monsters (passengers) on the bus represented his thoughts, feelings, moods and urges. The participant was told that as the driver, his chosen direction was to go towards his chosen values and the passengers was there to distract him from going towards his values. Participant was asked what he would do in such a situation.

*“This is a picture we call monsters in the bus. You are the driver of this Bus of Life and the monsters represent your thoughts, feelings, moods and urges. As the driver, you have a chosen direction to go towards your values, but the monsters are here to distract you from going towards your values. What would you do in this situation?”*

Asked the participant what would he do in such a situation?

- “I would toss them aside”

Asked participant what would happen if he did toss them aside?

- “Actually, maybe not, but that is what who you are right? I don’t know, it’s like tossing a big part of you”

Explained to participant that it was a natural reaction to toss the feelings, thoughts, urges aside, suppressing them or try to get a solution to solve.

Asked participant would that be helpful? Using his example of self-doubt and asked what would happen if he did suppress it?

He replied, “It would come up again, I don’t think that casting aside will change anything because it will come out again. The question is that I need to acknowledge the self-doubt, which I am doing. I keep reminding myself that sometimes it is good to have this but not let it overwhelm me. Because self-doubt is not entirely negative. Self-doubt is good for you to challenge yourself. If you don’t doubt yourself, you would not be doing anything different. You can spin a positive spin to that.”

Asked him how he would spin it?

“How I manage self-doubt is that every time I make a big decision in my life, I always have self-doubt but when I make a big decision it leads me to a better path, so why should I be any different from the past?” It is an emotion that will always come up because that is who I am, I am a rational person, I acknowledged that I will always have this.” I just need to be positive thinking”. He recognised that the negative thoughts need to be acknowledged and does not need to abandon them, they should not overwhelm me that he cannot move forward to decide. “I also need to acknowledge that sometimes these negative thoughts can be positive, you do not want to be irrational too, right?” “Personally, I think that these negative things are not entirely negative if you embrace it because it is who you are.

Explained to the participant that trying to get rid of the passengers would be futile. The passengers would always try to distract and influence his actions. Therefore, the participant would have to be aware of the presence of the passengers but continue to proceed to move towards his values.

Reiterated about goals and value. Moving away from negativity and towards the Values.

Debrief

- How to work with negative thoughts and emotions and work towards the value
- How to untangle from the thoughts and emotions.

## **Exercise 2 - Defusion Technique**

The purpose of this skill (defusion technique) was to help participant become aware of the unhelpful thoughts, emotions and moods He would experience and not to be entangled by them. The researcher highlighted the reasons for untangling oneself from thoughts, emotions and moods. The researcher explained to the participant: 1) how internal barriers (thoughts, emotions and moods) could cripple his well-being, 2) how the mind in the course of trying to protect them would end up being unhelpful as it would start to judge them, and 3) how when he was too caught up with his mind’s output would missed experiencing the present (this was to enforce mindfulness). The participant was then asked to write down unhelpful thoughts on Handout 4 (see Appendix 42), that have prevented them from pursuing his values based actions or goals.

*“Often we get caught up with our thoughts, emotions and moods and when we spend too much time on them, we tend to lose out on the experience of the present”*

*“Our mind will constantly be trying to help us in making us ruminate but that can be unhelpful as the mind will then start to judge us”*

*“Please use the handout 4 and write down some of the unhelpful thought that have prevented you from pursuing your values based actions or goals”*

### Exercise 3 – Cartoon Voice Technique

The purpose of using this technique was to create awareness about negative thoughts, emotions and moods was as a bit of a language (p 60, Harris, 2008) and not to take them too seriously. Using a cartoon voice and repeating the negative thoughts, emotions and moods, participant would be able to hear them in a different voice and they would lose their impact.

The participant was asked to take one of the unhelpful thoughts that he had labelled in the earlier exercise and focus on the impact of the that unhelpful thought. He was then asked to choose a cartoon voice. The participant was then asked to hear the unhelpful thought through the voice of the cartoon voice he has chosen. The participant was then asked to look at the unhelpful thoughts and notice any impact. Once the participant has shared his experience, the researcher reiterated the importance of being aware of the negative thought and that it was merely language.

*“From the negative thoughts you have identified earlier, focus on one of them and its impact.”*

*“Next please choose a cartoon character you like and hear that negative thought through the voice of the cartoon character.”*

*“Focus on the negative thoughts and notice any impact.”*

*“The purpose of this technique is to help you to recognise and be aware of negative thoughts and that they are merely words, not to be take them too seriously.”*

### Debrief

Participant was taught how to use a cartoon voice to repeat the unhelpful thoughts he had. The purpose of using the cartoon voice was to let the participant realised that the unhelpful thoughts, emotions or moods was part of a language. by repeating the unhelpful thoughts, emotions and moods in a cartoon voice, they would lose their impact.

P – “it is like infantilising”

Participant chose Donald Duck. He shared that

“It is funny. I see what you mean. You make it feels like it is not as serious as it would be”.

Reinforced with the placing of putting negative thoughts behind Values. Also, about RFT – framing

P - “You recognise unhelpful thoughts, have to pinpoint it and after that not make it too serious”

- Encourage the participant to practice.

#### Exercise 4 – Physical Demonstration of Fusion/Defusion (Harris 2009)

This exercise was used to demonstrate fusion and defusion and helped participant to be aware and be able to watch his thoughts. The participant was asked to write down an unhelpful thought as big as possible to cover a piece of paper. Once he has done so, he was asked to hold the paper tightly and held it up touching his nose. The participant was asked to look passed the paper (his unhelpful thought) at his surroundings. The participant was asked to describe the experience. He was then asked to move the paper slightly away from his nose and to hold the paper less tightly. The participant was asked to describe any difference between the two perspectives. He should reply that now he could see the unhelpful thought and his surroundings. Next the participant was asked to fully stretched out his arms still holding the paper and hold it till his arms ache. Once he was no longer able to hold up the paper, he was asked to put the paper down on his lap. The participant was then asked about his experience.

*“Please think of an unhelpful thought and write it as big as possible to cover the piece of paper.”*

*“Please hold up the paper and place it touching your nose and then look pass the paper at your surroundings.”*

*P: “I cannot see anything”*

*“Now move the paper slightly away from your nose and tell me what you see?”*

*P: “I can see the word SELF DOUBT clearer and also people around”*

*“Still holding your paper stretch your arm fully. Once you feel that your arms are aching, put your arms down and place them on your lap”*

*P: “that is so small”*

*P: “I am a little bit relieved”*

Once the participant shared his experience, he was debriefed.

#### Debrief

The participant was told that it was important to be aware of the unhelpful thoughts but to be mindful not to spend too much time on these thoughts as this would result in them missing out on things that was happening around them (when He put the paper touching his nose). He would thus not be being able to be in the moment. He would begin to see his surroundings and notice his thoughts when he put the paper slightly away from his nose (this was to create a healthy psychological distance from the unhealthy thoughts). He would learn to accept and be aware of the unhelpful thoughts but not actively trying to fight them when he put the paper down on his laps. This move was meant to allow the participant to experience unhelpful thoughts and be present at the moment, that is to be defusing from his unhelpful thoughts. (Hayes et al, 1999; Harris, 2009)

## Exercise 5 - Physicalizing Exercise

The purpose of teaching the participant this physicalizing exercise was to cultivate emotional acceptance skills. Similar to the defusion exercise before, this exercise was meant to help the participant to create a psychological distance between themselves and his emotions, moods and thoughts. The exercise sought to encourage the participant to open up about an uncomfortable emotion and notice the impact of the emotion as physical sensations that was experienced throughout his body. The participant was asked to objectify the feeling/sensation he experienced as an object out of his body. He was then asked to welcome the objectified feeling back to his body, as a form of acceptance of that feeling.

*“Please close your eyes and notice your body sensations and feeling as you breathe in and out. To focus on the sensations in your toes, hands tummy and the whole body. When your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back and notice the sensations.”*

*“Now I would like you to think of a stressful event, situation or a person and think on it for a few minutes. While you are doing this, be aware of any changes taking place in your body, for example feelings or physical reaction”*

*P: “My breathing has quickened”*

*“Identify where the feeling or physical reaction and then draw an imaginary line across the feeling. Be curious about this feeling as if it the first time you are encountering them.”*

*“Please imaging the feeling as a physical object and it has now popped out of your body.”*

*“The feeling is now outside your body, look at the feeling and now give it a shape. Next give it a colour. Then give it a weight.”*

*P: “It’s like mushed (like playdough), it is purple, then it is like a rock. Small like a crystal and quite small and light”*

*“Now take a step back and look at this object.”*

*“Next welcome the object now back to your body. Notice where the object has settled and draw an imaginary line.”*

*P: “Abdomen”*

*“Carry on focusing on your breathing. Turn your awareness now to your tummy and then the whole body. Taking your last breath in and out, when you are ready return to the room and open your eyes.”*

## Debrief

The participant was asked to share his experience in this physicalizing exercise. The participant was asked what the feeling was and the form it took as an object, its shape and weight. To reiterate that it was important to be able to notice feeling or emotion for what it actually was and where it can reside in the body. The purpose of objectifying the feeling or emotion and popping it out of the body was intended to create a healthy psychological distance between the person and his/her feeling and emotions. To reinforce psychological distance, the researcher did a quick hand as emotions exercise. Together with the participant, the researcher used his hands as emotions and covered his eyes. This was to indicate that as a person was embroiled in his or her feelings/emotions, he or she would find it difficult to look beyond them. But by moving the hands slightly away, this created a psychological distance that in turn provided a mindful perspective of the feelings/emotions.

Participant shared his experience

- “I feel good”

What do you think this exercise is for?

*P: “I feel like it is obviously taking a big weight off me, and then if forgiveness is the right word of having that negative emotion like you kind of forgive yourself and accept it back, so you don’t feel as bad about it, so you kind of forgive yourself”*

How do you feel when you are looking at it popped out of your body?

*P - “I feel lighter once it is outside my body, I feel like it is not part of me anymore, that it is separate part of me, so I said this forgiving thing because it is like another person, you forgive that and then when you forgive that and accept it back it is part of you again, so you forgive yourself”*

Asked participants to elaborate

*P: “Forgive yourself for the negative emotions that trigger the actions that you wished you had not done” (For example, being impatient with others)*

Asked whether it helped to physicalize the negative thoughts?

*P: “yes because you gave them a character, you separate it out, it is easier.” “It is easier to accept that negative emotion and thoughts”*

How did it feel when it is put back?

*P: “It is ok, still a little prickly”*

*P: “I am going to try the physicalizing exercise when I wake up in the night not able to sleep”*

### Home Practices 1, 2 and 3 (Handout 6 – Appendix 43)

For Home Practice 1, the participant was asked to engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that he would be performing over the following week. He was encouraged to use any form of reminder strategies. He was encouraged to notice what happened when he performed the chosen actions. He was required to write down any thoughts and feelings that would show up before, during and after he has performed each action. He was also asked to take notice of how others responded and any consequences of his actions.

*“For home practice 1, please engage mindfully on the three values-based actions that you have indicated to work on for the following week. You can choose any form of reminder strategies to help you to remember to do the practice.”*

*“Please write down any thoughts, feelings before, during and after you have performed your chosen actions.”*

*“Do take notice of how others respond to your actions and also whether there are any consequences to your actions.”*

For Home Practice 2, the participant was asked to achieve four values-based goals before Session 3. He was asked to focus on his short term goals.

*“For home practice 2, please look at the four short term goals you have recorded ins session 2. Please achieve these goals. Stay present and notice what happens as you pursue these goals.”*

For Home Practice 3, the participant was asked to take about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. He was asked to record any observations and comments.

*“For home practice 3, please spend about 10 minutes to practise mindfulness breathing exercises. You can use the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise for this practice. You will be given 4 copies to record your practice.”*

The participant was also given Handout 6 (See Appendix 43). This handout was meant to help participant, if he preferred, to visualize his behavioural process. The squiggly line diagonally up the centre of the page signified that to achieve a values-based direction, the process to be followed would be filled with twists and turns. The rectangular boxes were used for values-based actions and the empty scrolls represented the values-based goals the participants would like to achieve.

Once the instructions for the home practices had been explained, the second session ended with the participant and the researcher agreeing on the time and location for the next session. The next session was scheduled to take place one month later.

### **Session 3 – 11 Feb 2018, 1:30pm (1 hour 30 mins) Pickle Field, Singapore**

In session three, the participant's home practices for the whole month were reviewed. The researcher reviewed the mindfulness exercises and values-based actions. In doing so, the researcher was able to see whether the participant had used the skills he had learned and had progressed in his values-based actions. Similarly, queries were clarified, and concepts were reinforced.

In this session, the participant was asked to answer only the WAAQ questionnaire. This was in order to determine whether the participant's psychological flexibility scores had changed after the training sessions. In addition, the researcher conducted a short interview to understand how participants viewed the whole skills training process. To encourage him to carry on practising the new acquired skills, the participant was presented with home practices for further practice (Handouts 7 and 8 – see Appendices 44 and 45). To start this session, the participant was led to do a shorter version of the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes). This was to create awareness and mindfulness.

#### **Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise (5 minutes)**

In this exercise, the participant was asked to sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.

*“Sit in a comfortable position with an upright but not rigid posture.”*

The participant was asked to close his eyes. He was asked to breathe in through his nose and exhale out from his mouth.

*“Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and exhale out from your mouth.”*

The participant was then asked to pay attention to any sensations in his toes and feet (this was meant to encourage noticing). He was then asked to move his attention to any sensations or temperature change in his hands and fingers.

*“Now focus on your toes and feet, notice any sensations in your toes and feet.” (1 minute)*

*“Next bring your focus to your hands and fingers, notice any sensations or temperature change in your hands and fingers.” (1 minute)*

The participant was asked to notice how easy it was to drift away into thoughts and lose awareness of current physical sensations. The participant was asked to come back to the sensations when he had drifted away.



*“It is very easy to drift away into your thoughts and forget about the sensations you feel, when you find that your mind has drifted away, just bring your focus back to the sensations.” (1 minute)*

Next the participant was asked to put his focus on his abdomen and notice the movement and sensations of the abdomen with each breath he took.

*“Now turn your focus to your abdomen, with each breath you take, notice the movement and any sensations you feel on your abdomen.” (1 minute)*

The participant was then asked to focus on his whole body and to feel the sensations throughout his body.

*“Next turn your focus to your whole body and feel the sensations throughout your body.” (1 minute)*

Lastly, the participant was asked to open his eyes and come back to the room in his own time.

*“Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room.”*

*“Share with me your experience.”*

### Debrief

When the participant has completed the Brief Body and Breath Awareness Exercise, a debrief session ensued. The participant was asked what he noticed during the exercise. Once he has shared his experience, the researcher emphasized how easy it was to drift away in thoughts and lose awareness of the present. Reiterated the purpose of the exercise was to learn how to be aware of the present moment.

After the participant had shared his experience, a debrief was done.

Participant shared his experience

- “Just ah. my head is a bit groggy because I am quite tired, tightness on my neck, my lower back, just a rooted feeling, predominantly my hips, just feel drowsy”
- “Not much thoughts came through, apart from how drowsy I am. Also thinking about not too full from lunch, which was good that I have not over eaten”
- “Did feel like sleeping after this”

## Review of Home Practices

The purpose of reviewing the home practice was to enable the researcher to determine whether the participant had applied the skills he had learned. This was also a good opportunity to clarify any queries pertaining to the home practices, skills learned and reinforce the concepts of values and values-based actions.

### Home Practice 1 – Values Based Actions

Using the Two Skills Diagram (see Appendix 34), the relationship between mindfulness and values-based actions was reiterated to the participant. The researcher checked with the participant which values-based actions he had performed, what he had noticed before, during and after he had performed the actions. He was asked to share what values-based actions he has not performed. The participant was also asked to share internal and external barriers that prevented him from performing his values-based actions.

*“Remember the Two Skills Diagram? This is to remind you that mindfulness is closely related to the values based actions.”*

*“Please share with me what were values-based actions you have performed during the week. What did you notice before, during and after you have performed the actions?”*

*“Were there any value- based actions that you did not perform?”*

*“What were the internal and external barriers that prevented you from performing the values-based actions?”*

Participants shared his experience

Values – accepting yourself

- “Sometimes it is”. Using mindfulness exercise during gym regime. For example, could not do glute exercise and once he did a 3 mins mindfulness exercise, he was able to do the exercise. – instantaneous results
- “Workwise is a bit difficult as there are more internal barriers. For example, when things do not work, they become a vicious cycle” – not instantaneous results
- Reiterated about the different goals to achieve to move towards the Values (Reminded him about the monsters in the bus)
- Encouraged him to use whichever exercises that work for him. (Cartoon technique or physicalizing exercise)

- Showed an understanding that the techniques will eventually work, and it is all about accepting those negative thoughts and feelings. Participant recognized that it will take time to work towards values and not to just look at instantaneous success. Incremental steps.
- Reiterated about how the mind will always be fast to pass judgment. Encouraged participant to accept.
- Shared about using the physicalizing exercise to deal with hunger for the diet, frustration from the work, anxiety because not able to sleep. “I find it very useful”
- Do not think that cartoon technique was useful for himself.
- He shared that he felt calmer after using the physicalizing exercise after popping it out. And putting it back the problem did not appear to be so big anymore. Gave example of using it for his exercise regime and diet.

### **Home Practice 2 – Four Value-Based Goals**

Participant was asked whether he had achieved performing the four value-based goals. He was asked to share what he had noticed when he pursued the goals.

*“I would like to check whether you did achieve the four values-based goals?”*

*“What did you notice when you were pursuing the goals?”*

*Participant admitted that he should have taken stock of his actions to see that he has progressively in accepting his fears (not achieving what he set out to do, fear of failure, for example successful meetings etc.). Learning about cutting himself some slack instead allowing his mind to beat himself (e.g. maintaining his weight). Acceptance.*

*Acknowledged that he preferred to see his issues, emotions and thoughts, encouraged him to keep on using the physicalizing exercise.*

*Shared about the actions he has achieved for the past 4 weeks.*

*P – “I worked on my values and understand that it will take time to achieve them, incremental steps.”*

*P: “Negative thoughts appear but I verbalize them, acknowledge and accept them.”*

### **Home Practice 3 – Mindfulness Exercise**

Participant was asked about his experience with regards to the mindfulness exercises, how much time he had spent each day for the mindfulness exercise, their observations, and comments.

*“Please share with me your experience about the mindfulness exercises.”*

*“How long did you spend doing the mindfulness exercise each day?”*

*“What were your observations?”*

#### Mindfulness Exercise

P: “1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> week was consistent in his mindfulness exercise. 3<sup>rd</sup> week slightly not consistent.”

Participant shared that he struggled with anxiety that resulted in sleeplessness and did a longer mindfulness exercise to help him calm the anxiety.

Participant felt that mindfulness exercise kept him calm before an important meeting – “Before a meeting, I was nervous, so a few minutes of mindfulness helped me to stay calm”

- He only records those moments which were crucial (stopped him for performing his values-based actions) for the application of mindfulness exercise. Encouraged him to notice and be at the moment, even on moments that were not filled with issues/negative thoughts/stress/emotions etc.

#### **Values Consistency Exercise – Handout 7 (see Appendix 44)**

After reviewing the home practices, the participant was asked to fill in Handout 7. The purpose of doing this was to see whether how value consistent the participant had been for the past 1 month.

After he had completed filling up Handout 7, the researcher went through the information with the participant. The researcher asked the participant about the areas which were not consistent with his values, and their reasons for that. This allowed the researcher to reinforce the concepts and skills learned in previous sessions.

*“Thank you for filling up Handout 7, let us go through the handout.”*

*“There were some areas you have marked not consistent with your values. Could you share with me why this is so?”*

After the participant had completed Handout 7, the researcher proceeded to administer the WAAQ.

#### **WAAQ (see pages 8 and 9 of Appendix 29)**

As stated, the purpose of asking the participants to fill this questionnaire was to see whether his psychological flexibility had changed after the skills learning sessions and home practices. The participant was asked to answer the 7 questions in the questionnaire – WAAQ.

*“I would like to ask you 7 statements and please answer them as truthfully as you can.”*

*“Statement 1 – I am able to work effectively in spite of any personal worries that I have. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 2 – I can admit to my mistakes at work and still be successful.*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 3 – I can still work very effectively even if I am nervous about something.*

*You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 4 – Worries do not get in the way of my success. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 5 – I can perform as required no matter how I feel. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 6 – I can work effectively even when I doubt myself. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

*“Statement 7 – My thoughts and feelings do not get in the way of my work. You have seven options to choose from. They are: Never True, Very Seldom True, Seldom True, Sometimes True, Frequently True, Almost Always True, or Always True.”*

After the participant had completed the 7 statements, he was asked how the processes had helped him with regards to negative thoughts and emotions.

*“Please share with me how the processes have helped you with regards to negative thoughts and emotions.”*

*P - “Actually throughout the whole process, I have already started to ... kind of, ah. in fact, I feel more zen about it obviously only because in certain part I understand that a lot of people did things not what they mean, even though I felt that I was kind of bullied. but maybe I am more empathetic in a sense that they are not. so, I should not take it personally and that they did not harm me as well.”*

*P - “Also in the sense that I also kind of feel like during the whole process that we are doing that when you start to be mindful about yourself, the emotions you have towards certain activity, you also start to think that everybody goes through that, and then maybe my bully is not inherently a bad person, it is just a physical manifestation that he is not mindful of what he was doing. So that’s why I forgive him.*

*P - "To tell you the truth I already started to recover from it and I never think about it anymore. So, I just feel like I have move forward, which is one of my values"*

*P - "Through this process I kind of gain more understanding as a person."*

*P - "Makes me feel that I am stronger than I think I am"*

## **Research Debrief**

The research debrief was intended to let the participant know the purpose of the skills training sessions and how the skills could help helping those who had been exposed to workplace bullying.

The researcher explained the strategies used by victims of workplace bullying and how they could only be useful to a certain extent. For example, when victims were not able to seek redress, they could resort to counterproductive behaviours such as retaliation or being absent from work. If the strategies used were unsuccessful, victims might choose to leave. However, while leaving can help victims to stop bullying, victims continue to carry with them the emotional baggage of that experience, which can affect their psychological well-being. This could include rumination of the bullying experience and self-blame. In the workplace bullying literature, to date, there is no research focusing on how individuals can help themselves when they are being bullied (self-intervention).

The skills training sessions formed part of the self-intervention. The skills learned from the sessions cover the six core processes of the therapy Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. A brief explanation of the six processes were explained to the participants. The researcher then linked the skills learned to the bullying experiences the participants had gone through. This was done to allow the participant to see how the skills could be used to help him in managing the negative thoughts and emotions he might have felt or continued to be feeling due to his exposure to bullying.

*"Thank you for participating in all the sessions. I would like to take this opportunity to explain to you the purpose of my research."*

*"As you know, workplace bullying is unavoidable and often people will use various ways to counteract it. These could be direct or indirect ways. For example, an individual can choose to resort to behaving counterproductively, such as by retaliation or by being absent from work. However, when these strategies do not work, an individual may choose to leave the organisation. Although these strategies do provide a resolution for an individual, he or she would leave the organization carrying the baggage of the bullying experience and this can often impact on their psychological well-being. That is, the individual could spend time ruminating about their bullying experience and blame himself or herself for what had happened."*

*“Workplace bullying research to date has not address what bullied individuals could do to help themselves (self-intervention).”*

*“That is why the main focus of this research is to find a way to help bullied individuals.”*

*“The skills training sessions are part of the six processes of the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. The six processes are: acceptance, cognitive defusion, self as context, present, values and committed actions. The six processes enable an individual to become psychologically flexible, that is not to get stuck in negative thoughts, emotions, or moods, but instead to look at what matters to him or her (values) and to spend time working towards that.”*

*“The mindfulness exercise allows us to be aware of our surroundings, how we can be affected physically and physiologically when we are caught up with negative thoughts, emotions, and moods.” (Self-Awareness)*

*“Monsters in the Bus, Cartoon Voice Technique, Physical Defusion/Fusion Exercise and Physicalizing Exercise help an individual to accept and defuse negative thoughts, emotions, and moods. In using these, an individual will learn to create a psychological distance between himself and herself and the negative thoughts, emotions and moods. (self-as-context, a form of perspective taking)*

*“Home practices of stating values and values-based actions encourage individuals to use the skills of acceptance, defusion and perspective taking to work towards their values-based goals.”*

*“When applying these skills in the context of workplace bullying, an individual will learn not to let the bullying experience deter him or her from working towards his or her important values. So instead of trying hard to fight the bullying or the emotions, the individual will focus on what are the best ways to counteract the bullying (values- based action) and not let negative thoughts, emotions and moods derail him or her from the values.”*

Once the research debriefs had been completed, the researcher encouraged the participant to continue the home practices. The participant was given Handout 8 (see Appendix 45). The participant was told to follow the previous instructions that were given for the home practices if he decided to carry on.

*“Thank you once again for participating in this research. I would like to give you Handout 8. Although your participation in this research has ended, I would encourage you to carry on doing the home practices that are contained in Handout 8. You can use the previous instructions to help you continue your home practices.”*

To conclude the session, the participant were thanked again for his participation. He was assured that all data collected would only be used for this research and would be anonymised. He was told that should he decide not to have his data used for this research, he would need to contact the researcher.

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## **Chapter 2 – Cost of Workplace Bullying**

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#### **Chapter 4 – The Intervention and Methodology**

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Link to survey for pilot study

[https://survey.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_b2Cza0xKnythC05](https://survey.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b2Cza0xKnythC05)

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Link to survey for the actual research

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## **Chapter 7 – Results and Analysis**

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## **Chapter 8 – Discussion, Limitations & Further Research**

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